

ANGLO- SOVIET JOURNAL

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ENGLISH BALLET THROUGH RUSSIAN EYES

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THE ARTIST OF OUR TIMES

Dmitri Shostakovich

On the eve of his recent visit to London for the concerts of the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra, Dmitri Shostakovich published a forthright article in 'Pravda' setting forth his views on modern music and the position of the Soviet artist. In view of the interest in his music, and the frequency with which reviewers express concern at his 'tribulations', we reproduce this controversial, provocative article below, slightly abridged.

EVERY new stage in the life of the USSR, and consequently every new turning-point in the life of art, deepens our understanding of the great Leninist principle which we constantly keep in mind when thinking about the present : that art must belong to the people. There is great meaning in those words ; they essentially define the destiny of our art, the entire path of its development, and the artist's place in the creative endeavours of the whole nation.

'All of us are the people . . .', said Anton Chekhov, speaking for the artistic intelligentsia of Russia. His words take on a particularly profound, precise and direct meaning today in the conditions of socialist society, when every artist is proudly aware that the work to which we have dedicated ourselves is recognised throughout the country as work of national importance, that we are necessary to the people in their work and struggle, that it is given to us to see and understand the world, life and contemporary living history in the same way as the people see and understand them with their heart and mind and soul.

In our times, when the USSR has embarked upon the extensive construction of communist society, it is the lot of the artist to create a true picture of the times of which he himself is a witness and participant, in works that are vivid, inspired and profound. It is important only to be in time, to succeed in recognising the new that is being born today, in discerning the living features of the hero of our times, in grasping the great meaning of the events taking place in our age.

But it is really difficult for an artist to resolve his main task—that of educating the man of the future—unless he himself has a progressive outlook and does not have to 'pull himself up' in his own understanding of life to the level of the characters he portrays. The true artist must continually broaden his vision of the world and deepen his comprehension of the laws and ideas that impel its development.

In this connection I cannot help recalling a striking example from the last years of Stanislavsky's life. This great master, it seemed, had done everything by that time. His books were written, his ideas and principles had been formulated. Yet the thirst to learn what was new and to understand more deeply the philosophical ideas that inspired the people of his country never left him. Ill and confined to his flat in Leontievsky Street, he set to studying the philosophy of dialectical materialism and, with the extraordinary industriousness so characteristic of him, made outlines of philosophical works, took notes, and made marginal observations. In the course of this work, Stanislavsky must have made what was for him a new and—to use his favourite expression—'striking discovery', moreover an extremely important one—an understanding of the laws of the development of the society that had only been dreamt of by mankind's best minds.

In his speech at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League, Lenin spoke these magnificent words : 'If a communist thought to boast of

communism on the basis of ready-made conclusions he had imbibed, without doing a great deal of extremely serious and difficult work, without analysing the facts which he must examine critically, he would be a very sorry communist indeed. Such a superficial attitude would be absolutely disastrous. If I know that I know very little, I will see to it that I know more ; but if a man says that he is a communist and that he does not need to know anything thoroughly, then nothing at all like a communist will ever be made of him.' As I recall these words, I think of all the knowledge and experience each one of us has had to acquire together with the people in order to justify the title of Soviet artist. I also think about the fact that any knowledge will turn out to be formal and lifeless erudition unless it is applied to life and illumined by a clear, progressive world outlook; for only that can give the artist a sensitive ear, a keen eye, and a warm heart, wide open to all that is new in life.

* * *

IT is scarcely necessary to demonstrate the outstanding role that music with its ability to arouse a vivid, immediate emotional response, and to influence the formation of man's spiritual world directly, elevating him ethically and stimulating him to definite action, plays in the formation of the fully harmonised man of the future and in inculcating deep and noble feelings. Listening to the immortal music of Beethoven, Lenin observed that music awakens kind feelings towards human beings. Beethoven himself, who wrote his music for the millions, very clearly and simply expressed his idea of the main purpose of music : from heart to heart . . .

Soviet composers and musicians have the great honour of being direct heirs of the humanistic art of the great democratic composers of the past ; they stand firmly for the humanity and profound content of music tuned to the hearts of millions of their contemporaries. We are proud that the Communist Party regards music as a powerful means of educating the people and that, agreeing directly and openly with the communist world outlook, we share completely the Party's views on the content, role and main aim of art.

There is no need for us to conceal our complete identification with the Party or to hide the fact that we cherish the principle of devotion to the party ; for, in sharing these principles, we say that both the present and the future belong to genuine music—an art that unites rather than divides people, which speaks to broad masses of the people and not just to a handful of aesthetes and snobs.

When there are still people in other countries trying to prove—whether out of open political hostility to us or because of naive, purely childish illusions—that the principles of socialist aesthetics are dogmatic and do violence to the artist's creative individuality, we want to ask them : What kind of a ' musical credo ' do you oppose to the principles of our art ? Where is the ' aesthetic breadth ' of all the various modern musical trends mistakenly termed '*avant garde*' ? It is not difficult for us to answer that question : in fact, all progressive composers of the West have answered it long ago and so has the general public, truly appreciative of music, which has turned away with contemptuous irony from arid and crudely formalistic experiments that have nothing in common with art.

Never before in the history of music has there been such a dogmatic and dried-up system as this so-called dodecaphonic music. Built up on mathematical calculations, and artificially constructed, it has killed the soul of music which is melody, and destroyed the form and beauty of harmony and the wealth of natural rhythms : at the same time it has destroyed the slightest hint of content and humanity in music. Dodecaphonic music not only has no future, it does not even have a present; it is merely a 'fad' which is already on its way out. Both it and the 'latest' trends it has engendered, like pointillism

and the kindred electronic or concrete 'music', have long ceased to belong to the category of art.

It would hardly be worth our while to talk about these foolish 'fads' if there did not exist an 'aesthetics' nourishing this feeble plant. This aesthetics has been defined with the greatest clarity by one of the most energetic proponents of dodecaphonic style: 'The solitary man's fear is the canon of the aesthetics of the new art.' It is the offspring of the old world constantly receding into the past. It was created by people who are afraid of the present and do not believe in the future.

That, in fact, is all that the 'philosophy' of the western 'musical *avant garde*' amounts to: despite their addiction to sensationalism and self-advertisement, its representatives will never be able to interest any socially significant section of listeners in their wares. These smug individualists never stop shouting about 'the dogmatic party direction of Soviet culture' and 'the restrictions on the personality of the Soviet artist' supposedly denied the right to experiment and search and express his individuality.

We do not conceal the fact that we do not recognise the right of artists to engage in fruitless formal experiments, to disseminate through their art the pessimism, scepticism and misanthropic ideas engendered by the rampaging individualism of the modern bourgeois world. But nobody took that right from us; we artists of the new world deprived ourselves of the pitiful fate of the producers of effete art whose dehumanisation has become a point of pride for the modern pillars of the western 'musical *avant garde*'.

We have found the only true path—the path which leads to the creation of works with profound content and varied style, and accessible to wide audiences. We have chosen this path not because we have been ordered to, but at the bidding of the heart of an artist who feels himself to be a son of the people, a citizen of this socialist country, heir and successor to the great democratic traditions of his national culture. A sense of the importance of his work and a desire to understand and sing the praises of modern times have opened up wider horizons to the Soviet composer and have given rise to a remarkable sensation of innovation in musical style, and a need for daring and fruitful searching.

We speak of the clearly expressed contemporary style of Soviet music, marked by its non-recurrent qualities. Yet how versatily and deeply individually are these common qualities embodied in the music of Prokofiev and Myaskovsky, Aram Khachaturyan and Sviridov, Shaporin and Dmitri Kabalevsky, Khrennikov and Soloviev-Sedoi, Kara Karaev and Mshvelidze, Shtogarenko and Zhiganov, Zarin and Burkhanov. I mention these names not as a full list of our outstanding musicians, but merely by way of illustration.

Modernism with its moribund ideas and formalistic technical dogmas reduces art to one level and kills the artist's individuality. Those modern composers in the West who, in spite of this raucous musical 'vogue', defend the principles of true art able to evoke a response in listeners, making them think about important and complex problems, deserve even greater respect. We see such art in the best compositions—clearest in conception and form—of Bartok, Britten, Honegger, Villa-Lobos, Milhaud, Viegner, Auric, Poulenc, Durey, Orff, Barber and others. These are the compositions which, in my opinion, are the true *avant garde* of contemporary foreign music.

* * *

A WONDERFUL thing, the dream of the best artists of the past, may be observed in our country: there is a growing friendship between the critic and the artist he kritiches, based on mutual respect and severe demands on each other.

The Party gives us repeated examples of such criticism, whose purpose is to encourage the artist and direct the development of his creative initiative along correct and fruitful lines. I have always regarded party decisions on the development of Soviet art as providing above all a positive programme, which helps us to work more successfully and to see our goal more clearly.

We appreciate the Party's continual emphasis on the importance of cherishing and respecting talent. At our last meeting with its leaders M. A. Suslov, speaking on behalf of the Central Committee, said in particular that criticism must be careful and thoughtful, must clearly understand the real difficulties standing in the way of the artist, must know how to recognise and rejoice in his successes and, while condemning what is bad, support everything that is good in our literature and art. This imposes great obligations upon us. We must be sensitive to every serious creative aim of our fellow artists and not pass too severe or over-hasty judgments on them, something which, alas, neither the critics nor we composers always refrain from doing. While supporting everything that is new and valuable, we must not, however, make any allowance as to subject or make any concession to bad taste and creative inertia.

We are proud of the achievements of Soviet music, but we also recognise its grave shortcomings that act as a brake on its further progress. In songs and light music, these shortcomings take the form of a terrible sameness, gross philistinism and smugness; in the more serious genres of music they are the lifting of whole passages from other scores and the overloading of great serious themes with dull and inexpressive music. Even if the number of such works were to become smaller every year we would still have no right to pass them over indifferently, making excuses for their authors for not having expressed their own impressions of life daringly and vividly or for poor craftsmanship.

In great art, ideas cannot be separated from artistry and the reverse is also true. Our ideal is an artist with progressive ideas and superior craftsmanship.

There is another point I should like to make. The growth of socialist art depends in the most direct way on the spiritual development of the entire people. Naturally our principal task is to stimulate that development by creating works which enrich the people spiritually and help them cultivate deep feeling and noble aspirations. Yet that is not our only task.

Many composers and musicians have now thrown themselves enthusiastically into the work of people's universities of culture, amateur groups in workers' and collective farmers' clubs, and choral societies. About twenty teams of young composers have gone out to help start up cultural activities at the new construction sites in the country. The young musicians of Kiev have established 'aesthetic control' over the musical life of their native city. These are only isolated examples and could easily be added to.

We have still done very little in a field directly related to the development of the broad musical culture of our country. We put up with the extremely poor way in which the musical education of children is organised at primary schools. Workers' and collective farmers' clubs do not have enough qualified leaders, aids, scores, or books on music. The popularisation of good music through gramophone records has been terribly neglected. Surely it is the obvious duty of all composers and their professional unions to take a direct and active part in eliminating all these and many other obstacles that prevent people from sharing in our musical culture and from understanding the beautiful world of music.

—*Pravda*, September 7, 1960.

BEAUTIFUL ESTHONIA

Virginia Soermus

Virginia Soermus is a well-known musician and choir leader. Her husband, the Great Soermus, was a member of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917 and one of the leaders of the Revolution in Esthonia, who lived for many years in Britain between the wars. Mrs. Soermus made a first visit to Esthonia at the invitation of the SCR in connection with a book and film on the life of Soermus by Harry Koervets.

I HAVE lived in many countries, but have never been as enchanted as I was in Esthonia, during the white nights, when looking across the Baltic Sea at the blood-red sunset, with the scent of the pine trees from the forest all around me. The stillness, the sheer beauty, the wondrous peace, are unforgettable.

The Esthonian forests are particularly interesting, because they are full of colour. I picked lilies of the valley, lilac, asters, anemones, and a dozen other coloured flowers which I had always associated with gardens. That is probably why the Esthonian forests have the most intriguing scents, what with the flowers and the ever-to-be-remembered smell of fresh birches and pines. I well understand the enthusiasm that the Esthonians have for their forests, and in particular for the harebells of yellow and blue—which two colours, by the way, seemed the favourites.

This beauty and colour seem to seep through all Esthonian music. These ingredients, together with the tragedy of its history, combine to produce some of the world's richest music.

Just imagine, in a comparatively small country of almost 1,160,000 inhabitants there are about 900 clubs, to which are attached some 8,000 societies which comprise choirs, drama groups, folk dancing, etc. Most important is the fact that all these societies are active, giving their own concerts and performances and continually holding competitions. This means constant practice, which inevitably results in a very high standard indeed of all the arts.

The most magnificent choir I ever heard in my life is that of the State Academic Male Choir of 90 voices. Each man is a concert artist in his own right, having studied for three years in the Conservatorium of Music. They are paid equally with engineers and other qualified professions. Their conductor is the wonderful Gustave Enersaks. To me their singing of the Finnish folk song on which Sibelius based his well-known *Finlandia* was something to have lived for. 'As one voice' is an old cliché which has more or less lost its meaning, but that is precisely the only description one could possibly give them. I long for the day when we here in Britain can have the privilege of listening to this 'one-voice choir'. What singing!

I was continually thrilled by the abundance of music of every calibre in Tallinn—in fact all the arts were of a particularly high standard.

For instance, there is a ballet school run by a remarkable woman, Anna Exston. I was present at an outstanding performance of young ballet dancers when they did *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The oldest member of the ballet was 19, and he danced Falstaff. And what a Falstaff! Without doubt he was brilliant, and his acting was superb. Indeed, it is impossible to single out any particular performer; they were all brilliant. The decor, costumes, everything was perfectly arranged to portray the Elizabethan era. Great credit must be given to their particular orchestra for its excellent interpretation of the works of Purcell and Fletcher which were performed throughout the ballet. I enjoyed very much their presentation of our beloved *Greensleeves*.

Then the drama really was pure unadulterated drama. I saw an unforgettable *Merchant of Venice* with an astonishing Portia. One of the things which impressed me very much about this performance was the cosiness of the set-up. One had the feeling of actually sitting in Portia's sitting-room and taking part in the conversation. If ever in my life I met Shakespeare's Shylock, it was in this theatre. This man could roar like a lion and coo like a dove. His performance was impeccable. With a slight gesture he could grip his audience, and his every movement was electrifying. I later met this great actor, and imagine my astonishment to find he was blind. How he could stride across the stage and sweep his cloak around him, move quickly here and there, is a complete mystery, and I cannot hope to understand.

In passing, I should like to mention a very important fact—that after the performance anyone who wishes to talk to the actors about the production is encouraged to go back stage and discuss problems. What a wonderful idea ; and no wonder there are so many brilliant performers in all sections of the arts when this sort of thing is advocated.

There are so many conductors, composers, musicians, dancers, dramatists that it is impossible to speak about them individually ; but one particular noteworthy is Eugen Kapp. A quiet, intense man—and it is difficult to couple his demeanour with some of his music, which is indicative of mighty strength and violent passions. I heard many of his compositions, and shall never know which one captivated me most. I heard a beautiful composition on a Finnish theme treated with a modern harmony and synchronisation. It was spell-binding hearing an uninterrupted old folk song with an exciting tempo, in a completely original rhythm, building up underneath.

Eugen Kapp has been most prolific in his works, and so has his cousin, William Kapp, as well as Gustave Enersaks, Harry Koervits, and many others ; but one outstanding opera by Eugen Kapp has to be seen to enjoy the true significance of this great drama of early Esthonia.

This is called *The Flames of the Revenge* and is based on the uprising of the Esthonian people in the year 1337. You can see here how far back Esthonian history has been reached for some of its finest music of the present day. The uprising was against the German barons who dominated the Esthonians to a point of slavery. History records some most atrocious happenings of that period. Everything lends itself to a composer of Eugen Kapp's ability for the most thrilling drama opera. This historical event is a composer's delight, for it has all the elements required for first-class drama. Another opera of his is called *The Band of Freedom* and this depicts the struggle of the Esthonians against the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1947.

Esthonia is not a boisterous country, but a gentle one. It is like a sweet 'cello to the mighty Soviet orchestra—a quiet but integral part of the whole.

In all Esthonian music there is a clever introduction and arrangement of events in its past and present life. All the modern composers have made full use of the rich harvest afforded them by the outstanding dramatic situations which arose periodically throughout the country's stormy history. Furthermore, all the exciting and virile present-day life is ideal for any type of pictorial music. I could go on for ages describing the themes in the wonderful operas, operettas, ballets, oratorios, etc. In addition, there are endless quartets, symphonic music, light music, children's music, choir music—music, music all the way !

Visiting the concert halls and theatres, one is conscious of emotions not usually felt in the ordinary way. I suppose it is accounted for by the close alliance of story and music. Nowhere else and in no other musical compositions has this idea of harmony and words been so closely woven to bring the pattern to life. It does appear that the Esthonian composers are past masters at this

sort of thing. I can think of no more thrilling experience than to have a month of Esthonian music in all its forms. It is more than a pity that such an abundance of music as inspired by the variety of expression in Esthonian composers cannot be heard the world over, for in it are to be found all the desire, despair, joy and achievement that are the heritage of a courageous and cultured race.

Here are a few titles of some much-loved music which explains itself by the colour of the musical composition—they speak for themselves: *The Holy Lake, The Coast of Storms, The Light at Koordi, Hand in Hand, At the Far Coast, The Goldspinnners, Kalevipoeg, The Lights on the Home Port, It is only a Dream, The Singing Fields, The Flight of the Eagle, How the Fishermen Live.* There are hundreds more fascinating titles and each composition is a great work of art.

Whether from historic records or present-day life, the magnificent music of these Esthonian composers is wonderful. I heard many times orchestras composed of Esthonian national instruments—kannels. These instruments resemble zithers in some respects, and I was amazed at their extraordinary quality. They can be as sweet as honey, as tantalising as gipsy violins and as pathetic as any reed instrument played pianissimo. No wonder some of the dances are so gay when accompanied by the kannels with such wild abandonment. I leave to the imagination the effect produced when some of these choirs get together accompanied by them.

I cannot close without mentioning the most remarkable woman I have ever met. She is Olga Lauriston, whose second name should be courage. At twenty she was thrown into prison, and not released until twenty years later. She is still beautiful, courageous and clever, and serving a community who adore and respect her for her devotion and integrity.

I could speak for ages on the sheer beauty of the emerald landscape, the romantic and glorious white nights, the magic of the forests, the natural corn-coloured hair of the women, the delicious butter always arrayed on the plates like bunches of daffodil flowers, the sweet custom of laying a sprig of flower (in bloom at the time) by the side of one's plate, the fine old square in Tallinn where stand all the important buildings (so convenient), the gay restaurants and lovely walks under the trees lining the gracious boulevard.

Yes. Esthonia has everything—beautiful, musical Esthonia!

Glimpse of a Poet

ROBERT DAGLISH

THE difficulty of rendering Russian poetry into English cuts off a great many people who are interested in Soviet culture from one of its aspects that is as important to the whole as, say, religion in the West. Besides theatre-going, the reading of poetry at home and in public is perhaps one of the commonest occupations of serious-minded people in the USSR. Not that the poetry is religious (the best has an earthy and satirical ring), but the role of the arts, and poetry in particular, in forming moral and ethical standards has been tremendously enhanced since the Church ceased to have any appreciable influence in public life.

Anyone who has heard an actor like Aksyonov reciting his dramatised arrangement of *Peer Gynt* at the Conservatoire, or listened to the young poets reading to summer gatherings in the parks, or merely to a spontaneous piece of recitation at a party or wedding, cannot fail to be impressed by the way Russians have made poetry so much a part of their lives.

But what kind of poetry? It is a great pity that with the exception of Jack Lindsay's fine contribution, *Russian Poetry 1917-1955*, there is so little to go on. But perhaps a glimpse of one of the younger poets, the people he writes for and what he writes about will help to repair a gap in the general picture.

Though few of the critics, I imagine, would acknowledge Yevgeny Yevtushenko as representative of modern Soviet poets, he is certainly one of the liveliest and most popular. I first heard him reading his poems at the Potemkin Pedagogical Institute, at one of the weekly meetings of the Institute's poetry section. Most of the audience were obviously students, well under 25. But there was a sprinkling of older faces; the Institute's doors are open in the evenings to anyone who cares to join in such activities.

The plan of the evening was that those who had something to say about the poet should address the meeting, after which the poet should recite and also answer any questions that had been raised. It was only roughly kept to, however, owing to the general impatience to hear Yevtushenko that reigned from the moment he entered the room. It was a little disappointing, in fact, to see the only would-be critic (a dark, rather handsome young woman who seemed to have an almost motherly anxiety for the poet) so unceremoniously 'clapped off' the stage. I soon succumbed to the general mood, however, when Yevtushenko started reading.

He is a tall, fair-haired young man. When I saw him again last summer he was dressed rather deliberately *à la mode* and his hair was just recovering from a Mayakovsky-like crop that had brought out the tapering Scythian lines in his face. He has long, capable-looking hands, and a manner and delivery ideally suited to the kind of poetry he writes, which is more often conversational than declamatory. That evening at the Institute the audience listened breathlessly while he recited poems about his childhood in Siberia (*Boots, The Girl with Me, In the Rear*), student life (*Moscow Goods Station*), poems of angry and humorous protest (*And Others, Nihilist, To Cowards*), poems about women (*Tie Department Girl, Ira, Shoe Factory*) and poems about Yevtushenko himself.

It is, of course, impossible to describe a poem in prose, but I feel that, as yet, Yevtushenko's matter is more important than his manner, and one can at least be specific about his subjects. He was born in the Irkutsk Region in 1933 and spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Siberia, where he worked at collective farms and lumber camps and took part in geological expeditions. He came to Moscow in 1948 to study at the Gorky Institute of

Literature and got into print in the following year. His early poems are full of the sights and smells of the taiga, and they often recall the problems that war and evacuation brought to this remote region. Though undistinguished in form, these poems evoke scenes from childhood that are both honestly personal and have a wide general application. One feels that the incidents they describe could have happened to hundreds of other Soviet youngsters. Above all, they are the work of an observant and questioning mind. Perhaps the best of them is *Boots*.

The boots of the poem are a magnificent pair of American boots which the poet wears on a wartime train journey and which are the envy of the whole carriage, particularly of a youngster his own age who had none. 'I had boots. His feet were bare. What of it! But I tried to look the other way.' In the bustle of an early-morning halt the other boy steals the boots and runs off with them. After a desperate chase the poet recovers his property, but is then overcome by remorse for the tears of the other boy.

Perhaps because he is more subjective than most Soviet poets Yevtushenko brings a fresh approach to themes such as May Day that in the course of 40 or more years of public celebrations have been worn almost threadbare by press and radio. In poems such as *Celebrate the First of May* and *Talking to the Revolution* his approach is that of the post-war generation that has missed the great victories of the Revolution, the Civil War and the Second World War, and at first he seemed a little overawed by this tremendous heritage of suffering and heroism. In *Fighting for Soviet Power*, however, he avoided a sense of frustration—which it would be quite natural for many of his generation to feel—with two well-defined conclusions. One is a rejection of romantic nostalgia for past glories ('You're in a hurry to die for Grenada? Why not try living for it instead?'). The other proclaims that the new battlefield is to be found in fighting the small-scale injustices of everyday life, in upholding personal integrity against any form of hypocrisy that may creep in under cover of revolutionary phrases.

This was a bold programme for any poet to undertake in a country where criticism has to be serious and closely defined, but Yevtushenko has made a very honest attempt to carry it out. For the last five years he has poured out his sympathy for women who are lonely and overworked, women deceived, women with drunken husbands; he has used the biting edge of his sarcasm on those who lack the courage to speak up for a comrade or a colleague; he has inveighed against the young 'survivals of the present' who loaf about the suburban dance floors, and with equal vigour defended the factory girls who want to make themselves smart and keep up with the fashions. In the witty and touching *Nihilist* he has a line about the playwright Sofronov which never fails to raise a laugh against that pillar of conformity, and he also reminds us that there is many a young man with extraordinary 'nihilistic' views ('He didn't like Gerasimov, he liked Picasso') who will give his life for a friend in a crisis. In the interesting poem *Angries* he compares himself with the angry young men of the West and comes to the conclusion that his own anger is generated not by lack of faith but by a positive feeling for his own country. And along with all this he has adopted a jaunty 'life-is-good-let's-enjoy-it' attitude that lays him wide open to accusations of self-admiration, egoism and philandering.

These criticisms are not without foundation. Some of the poems he published last year in the magazine *Oktyabr* (*What Then?* and *Loneliness*) do suggest a growing taste for the bedroom and a sad lapse from his own sturdier creed of a few years before. The *Hymn to Mediocrity* can also be taken as a snappish attempt to counter any criticism on the grounds that it is motivated by envy of the poet's gifts. I find it harder to agree, however, with Zaslavsky's criticism of Yevtushenko's latest poem, *Count Me a Communist* (*Yunost*, No. 2, 1960). Dedicated to Mayakovsky, the poem is, in fact, a restatement of Yevtushenko's

earlier resolve to fight for the Revolution in all the small ways that present-day Soviet life offers. Its angry lines against those who made trouble for Mayakovsky in his lifetime are based on fact, and it is hardly fair to fob off a poet who thinks the lesson of those days worth recalling with a sarcastic : 'You're no Mayakovsky, you know !', which is what Zaslavsky's criticism amounts to.

At one of the Yevtushenko readings I attended it was interesting to hear the poet himself answering such questions as : 'What do you think of Zaslavsky's criticism of you in *Pravda* last week ?' or 'Whose poetry do you respect besides your own ?' Yevtushenko said he was thinking hard about Zaslavsky and the final lines of his poem

"Count me a Communist !' I plead,
May that phrase,
Unlike words gain-prompted to mislead,
Be true of all my living days."

might be ambiguous. He had not intended them as a slur on Party members.

In his poem *Career* Yevtushenko says he wants to emulate the 'careers' of such men as Galileo, Pasteur and Tolstoy, and the poem ends with a characteristic paradoxical flourish : 'I want to make my career by not making it.' Many critics have found these lines presumptuous.

If Yevtushenko ties himself to the chariot of self-expression, as Whitman did, he will have to suffer a lot of mental anguish to reach the heights at which he aims, but I have heard him say that his first love in poetry is neither Mayakovsky nor Whitman, but Pushkin. Pushkin is and probably always will be for Russians the most popular of all Russian poets. But Yevtushenko has his own special reasons for liking him. He believes there is absolutely nothing in life that one cannot make a poem about, and that Pushkin did this better than anyone before or since. The other thing he admires about Pushkin is his ability to write a poem that reaches to the very depths of human understanding and the next moment dash off something entirely light and flippant.

In the press there has been much controversy about Yevtushenko's style. A. Urban in his article *Thoughts on Poetry* for *Zvezda* describes Yevtushenko as a 'poet of external colours'. 'The gush and sentimentality that prevail in Yevtushenko's lyricism are embodied in a definite and original method of expression. . . . Instead of profound knowledge the poet prefers brilliance and external colours, undefined possibilities, a superficial dabbling in everything the world has to offer.' On the other hand, Vladimir Barlas, answering readers of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* who asked for a thorough analysis of Yevtushenko's work, writes of the poem *Bicycle*, which he obviously admires very much : 'The "wet coins" the poet receives as change from the girl who sells him a glass of *kvass*, the poet himself lounging against the "sun-warmed cistern", the girl's refusal to tell him her first name, and her remark: "What a sly lot you all are !"—these are all trifles, details, of course. But they are deftly selected from hundreds of other apparently equally trivial details and skilfully fashioned to the regular pulsating rhythm.'

Perhaps the best comment on Yevtushenko comes from another poet, who is about 15 years older. Less controversial than Yevtushenko, Boris Slutsky regards himself as one of the survivors of a whole generation of poets who were lost in the war. His best poems (*The Women Didn't Weaken*, *Horses in the Sea*, and *In the Bath-house*) have been carefully hewn out of a granite-like sincerity. At one of our gatherings he said of Yevtushenko : 'I respect Yevtushenko's work because he writes of things that it is not always customary for us to speak about. But I want him to grow, I want him to think harder about the subjects he chooses.'

If Yevtushenko succeeds in avoiding the dangers of hero worship and in subjecting his work to the kind of analysis Slutsky suggests, the Soviet Union will have gained a very considerable poet.

SIX HUNDRED YEARS OF RUBLEV

S. Osiakowski

IN religious art realism made its appearance in an epoch when even invisible concepts had to assume a form which was determined by earthly experience so as to convince the onlooker of their truth. This peculiar anthropomorphism of the theocratic form, having affected also the deities of the Christian pantheon, impressed itself in particular on the Byzantine tradition in its age-long following of the ancient conceptual approach to religious pictorialism. This ancient tradition began to change in line with the æsthetic requirements of societies as geographically distant from each other as Siena and Constantinople in the 13th and 14th centuries, and in the 14th and 15th centuries in Novgorod and Moscow.

In an art bound by tradition its religious character compelled a ceremoniousness of representation and some sort of ethereal perfection. The æsthetic significance had a secondary import; the basic function was didactic, to induce the onlooker to think of the deity. What was important to a believer was a benign mask and a blessing hand. After all, the object of the cult was an abstract being: hence the difficulty of representation of a supernatural phenomenon, hence the tendency of showing the latter in a symbolic rather than a human shape. This abstract being appeared as a messenger from the divine paradise into the world of men, and the canon of supernatural anatomy deprived the divine body of any plasticity of form, reducing it to a flat combination of lines. These give the desired impression of weightlessness and ghostliness, while the sumptuous dresses of many an archangel were meant to emphasize their high rank in the heavenly aristocracy. The background shine of a golden sheet aimed at abolishing space as a pictorial element with a view to conveying the illusion of endless radiation of the cosmic light.

Even more than in the icons, the eastern hieratic canons tend to abstraction in mosaics, the other form of religious art. A picture made up of small pieces of coloured stone or glass, by its very nature, imposes upon the artist a schematic manner. We shall see later how the most talented among religious painters could create, even within the framework of such strict limitations and regulations, works not only technically outstanding, but also in their own way breaking through the other-worldliness, works reflecting the deepest reality of life. Such was the work of Andrey Rublev.

Summarily speaking, he effected a change from the general iconographic and stylistic prototypes, flat and standardised as described above, in the direction of a heightened emotionalism, truly human especially in the expression of tenderness and even pathos. To achieve this and avoid sentimental mannerism required a dynamically expressive realistic method.

Rublev was born, nobody knows where, some time between 1360 and 1370, when most of Russia was still under occupation by the Mongols who first invaded the country in 1244. Unoccupied remained the north-western republic of Novgorod, whose trade with western Europe and Scandinavia enriched the city merchants and encouraged them to build magnificent churches and have them decorated by both Russian and foreign, notably Greek, artists. The most famous among the latter was Theophanes, called the Greek, who came to Novgorod from Constantinople about the time of Rublev's birth. Although the capital of the Byzantine empire did not fall to the Turks until 1453, the decline of that empire had set in even before Theophanes' time, and he left his country to find in Russia a wider scope for his art. He was one of a long line of Byzantine artists who supplied icons and murals—at first almost exclusively—to Kiev, where Prince Vladimir introduced Greek-orthodox Christianity in 988. These artists kept up their predominance until Russian

masters joined them in ever-increasing numbers in Novgorod, Vladimir and Suzdal in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries. The 14th century saw the birth of a Moscow school of religious art. The first defeat of the Mongols in the Kulikovo battle in 1380 at the hands of the Moscow Prince Dmitri Donskoy must have had a stimulating effect on the church-building and artistic activity in that capital. Such aura must have been inspiring for young Rublev, who, it seems, spent his youth in the nearby Troitsky monastery. It is not known whether its founder, Father Sergey, was still alive when Rublev entered it. But the patriotic and humanistic ideas which Sergey was propagating must still have been a living source of inspiration in the monastery.

At the time when the Moscow principality was gathering round itself for a successful war against the foreign occupants all the living national forces hitherto dispersed in feudal antagonisms, monasteries became veritable centres of Russian culture. Their number was growing in the course of the 14th century and the Troitsky monastery became the soul and heart of the movement. Sergey was travelling about the country reconciling warring feudalists and giving his blessing to Dmitri for the fight against the Tartars. Soon after their first defeat at Kulikovo, in the early 1390s, Theophanes, who was responsible for the murals in St. Saviour, the biggest Novgorodian church, moved to Moscow, very likely at the invitation of Dmitri, to paint there many churches and palaces. Probably about the same time Rublev left the Troitsky monastery to settle down at the Andronnikov monastery within sight of the Kremlin. The contemporary Moscow chroniclers record the surprise of Theophanes' colleagues at his daring to paint at the behest of his inspiration without the usual consultation with the prescribed iconographic canons. Theophanes hyperbolised and dramatised the images of the saints ; he was a past-master of monumental art. His pictorial line is never hieratically static, His rhythmic wavy movement not only brings life to the form, but assumes an æsthetic value almost on its own merits. But what matters in our context is that Theophanes' and especially Rublev's work reflected new and kindred philosophical conceptions within the religious complexities of the Greco-Christian world.

Russia, like England, knew no Renaissance in the west-European sense, she certainly could not have known it in conditions of the Mongol occupation which lasted two centuries. But the liberating spirit of Kulikovo was undoubtedly abroad, and radiating in particular from the Troitsky and other monastic centres of militant humanism. The old symbolism of the invisible or abstract Absolute outlived its function and was replaced by human personages who embodied grace and compassion, a truly human sentiment. Such development found its counterpart in the West in the new religious attitude of St. Francis, and helped in the Italian trecento Simone Martini (died 1344) to be one of the first to break the rigid Byzantine tradition of icon-painting and show holy men as more human. St. Francis and St. Sergey were among the philosophical sources of inspiration for an art which I think reflected popular beliefs rather than the orthodox views of the church hierarchy. Simone Martini and, as we shall see soon, Rublev reflected in their work the new interest in man, in the tragedy of his life and the hope of salvation, but nothing more of the olympian perfection and cold beauty so characteristic of the previous world of ecclesiastic art with its rigid division into saints and sinners.

It is no longer possible to assume that Rublev knew the Sienese icons ; there was no contact then with Italy. But in both countries art began developing under the impact of this new interest in man and his world, and in this broad development Rublev occupies an important place. He and other followers of Sergey lived a hard-working life full of sacrifice and study, which led down to the very bases of Greek philosophy. Although there is no ground to say that Theophanes was Rublev's teacher, the Greek's work must undoubtedly have made a deep impression on Rublev. It is, perhaps, permissible

to guess that Rublev wondered why there was in the older master's work not a single image of quiet joy, youthful innocence or clarity of form. It was as though the Greek emigré wore the spiritual birth-marks of the declining country of his origin, in spite of the exhilarating atmosphere of the ascending country of his adoption which, as recent researches have now established, provided him with some prototypes of his own pictures in the earlier Novgorod and Pskov frescoes which he undoubtedly knew.

In 1405 Theophanes, the monk Prokhor and Rublev (their names were chronicled in this order) were engaged on the murals and iconostasis of the newly erected Annunciation church in the Moscow Kremlin, but the individual attribution of work to each of the three in the common composition is at present hardly possible. In Rublev's time art work was still impersonal and collaboration very close. He himself was working among a crowd of gifted artists, many of whom, while remaining anonymous, actively contributed to a whole period of Russian art identified with Rublev's name.

At Zvenigorod, near Moscow, ruled Prince Yuri, son of Dmitri Donskoy. He was a close associate of Sergey and the Troitsky monastery and Rublev was invited to paint in the Zvenigorod cathedral, probably while he was still working in the Annunciation church. Rublev's Saviour in Zvenigorod is shown with an open face, looking friendly at people, while the fair-headed Archangel Michael in the same icon, who wears pink and light-blue robes, bends his curly head. This was a far cry from the mid-14th-century Saviour known as the Stern-Eyed in Kremlin's Uspensky (Dormition) church. Rublev lived in better, more humane times, and reflected them in his Zvenigorod Saviour.

It was round about 1405-7, and in Zvenigorod, that Rublev, no longer working with Theophanes, blossomed out as a rare colourist. Nobody before was able to create such an extraordinary harmony of cold blues with tender pinks and gold. In 1408, when Theophanes was no longer alive and Rublev began to be reputed for his work in the Kremlin, he and his older friend, the monk Daniel Tchorny, were engaged to cover with frescoes the ceiling, columns and walls of the western half of the ancient pre-Mongolian Uspensky cathedral in Vladimir. They were also to provide paintings for its iconostasis. *The Last Judgment* was Rublev's theme. The Byzantine school treated this theme sternly by painting scenes of severe punishment for sins and of terror of judged humanity, as well as the unmitigated wrath of the judges. By contrast, it is characteristic of the ancient Russian sagas to lay stress on the hopes of men to win the pardon of the Lord, to find Him indulgent to human weaknesses. In accordance with such popular attitude, Rublev's work at Vladimir is permeated with the spirit of almost joyful expectation shining in the eyes and faces and postures of those whom he depicted as keeping up a strong faith in the happy future instead of standing in paralysing fear of punishment.

The iconostasis in the same church displays a group of righteous men being led to paradise by the apostles. Among the latter Peter has none of the pride and severity of Theophanes' pictures. His portrayal expresses his full confidence in men, his conviction that good treatment will generate good response in them.

A special place in *The Last Judgment* of Vladimir, in fact a unique place in all Russian religious art, is occupied by the exquisite figure of an angel trumpeting the approach of the Judgment. Rublev shows the angel's face almost in a profile, which was then uncommon. The angel's visible joyous excitement and smile reveal such a degree of human understanding as was never before painted in this part of the world. This angel is the highest embodiment of that spirit of harmony and peace which, in sharp contrast to the orthodox pictures of the judgment, shows the multitude depicted in this Vladimir church as looking in joy and good heart up to the throne of their Judge.

Rublev began working in Vladimir in May 1408, but in December of that year the Tartars came up to just outside Moscow and went away only after they had burned and pillaged the countryside and were paid an enormous ransom in treasures and slaves. Two years later they suddenly attacked Vladimir and ransacked all churches. Hunger and black death ravaged the country. The Troitsky monastery was completely burnt down. When the storm passed, Nikon, a pupil of its founder, Sergey, decided to erect a vaster stone building in place of its wooden structure, and Rublev and his friend Daniel Tchorny were asked to paint the murals and the iconostasis. Thus Rublev found himself working in a place where he spent his youth. Remarkable years of creative work followed, which he shared with the rest of his much-tried country. Only a small part of his work survived, but the finest among it is his *Trinity*.

The Old Testament tells us that three young men called on old Abraham and how he and his wife Sarah, who was informed by them that despite her old age she would give birth to a son, were entertaining them under an oak tree in the garden. The patriarch and his wife had a premonition that God himself was their guest. In the traditional Byzantine pictures, usually overloaded with detail, the three messengers were shown as curly-haired, winged youngsters. Rublev's conception is based on the ancient religious philosophical idea of the tripartite unity symbolising the spiritual unity of the world. He depicted it in the shape of the three angels, leaving out of account the circumstances of God's descent, customarily in the figure of the middle angel. But the cup on the table with the angels sitting round it, the tree and Abraham's tent in the back were left by Rublev to remind one of the biblical story. The middle angel is seated somewhat higher than those on his sides, but, contrary to the accepted cliché, their dimensions are all the same and there is no hierarchy among them. They sit in a circle, of which the centre is the cup on the table. Rublev's ethical idea might have been what was the overriding idea of his time : through unity of effort of the hitherto feudally atomised principalities to victory over the age-long external foe and to freedom of a unified young nation. As was often the case in the Middle Ages, a popular idea of political unity assumed religious clothing.

Rublev's composition of the Trinity in a circle obtained its full philosophical significance as a symbol of unity and perfection. True enough, the Byzantines used the circle in drawing the Trinity, but it visibly enclosed the grouping as if introduced from outside. Rublev's is an invisible circle which is infinitely more effective in subtly convincing us that the three superb beings, each with his specific beauty and sensibility, must and do form one indivisible entity. This happy impression is further enhanced by the remarkable colour scheme of this icon (now in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow). The first thing that strikes the eye is the quietly joyful blue of the cloak of the middle angel while his heavily hanging right-hand sleeve is harmoniously contrasted by a dark crimson colour. To his right and next to this colour we see an angel whose cloak is light mauve with a spot of blue on his robe underneath. To the left of the middle angel and beside his blue cloak the third angel is wearing a green cloak with a blue robe protruding from underneath. The various hues of the blue predominate in the colouring of all vestments and the whole composition is delicately held together by the balancing of the colours of the side figures with those of the middle angel, resulting in a most satisfying sense of harmony encompassing the three.

In the *Trinity* as in his whole work which survived destruction Rublev can be seen to be deeply rooted in the common stock of universal emotion of his epoch. In his rare poetic imagination and his capacity to evoke intensely human emotions, he gave his work its special quality which moves us today as deeply as it must have done nearly six centuries ago.

THE EXHIBITION OF BRITISH PAINTING IN THE USSR

Mary Chamot

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THE eagerly awaited exhibition of British painting, arranged by the British Council in Moscow and Leningrad in the summer of 1960 as a follow-up of the Russian display at the Royal Academy in January-February 1959, was not the first collection of English art to be seen by the people of Russia in recent years.

In March-April 1956 a collection drawn from the museums of the USSR was brought together in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow. On that occasion Irina Kuznetsova wrote a paper for the Pushkin Museum Bulletin, 1960, p. 142, in which she pointed out the parallel development of the Russian and English schools of painting in the eighteenth century, when both excelled in portraiture, and quite rightly stated that, compared with other continental collections, the Russian holdings of English art were very considerable.

In the last quarter of the 18th century a great interest in English art was shown in Russia: Catherine the Great began to buy English pictures for her collection, and the Scottish architect Charles Cameron did his best work in Russia. George Dawe and other English painters worked at the Russian Court. Hogarth became popular through his engravings, and the 19th-century Russian painter Fedotov owed so much to them that he was sometimes known as the Russian Hogarth.

All this served to pave the way for the generous reception given to the British Council exhibition, when for the first time the actual paintings of Hogarth could be seen in Russia, as well as a far fuller representation of later English art from the 18th century to the present day than had ever been seen there before. The superb masterpieces of Reynolds, Gainsborough and Constable were particularly admired, though, strangely enough, Wilson attracted less attention, perhaps on account of his tendency to idealisation. Some criticism was expressed of the minor painters, Wootton, Morland and Wheatley; the latter struck the Russians as sentimental, although the picture of 'Mr. Howard relieving prisoners' was specially chosen on account of its rather realistic treatment and his association with Russia.

Of our two great landscape painters Constable was greatly preferred to Turner, and was in fact very much better represented. The five large Turners were all sea pieces and somewhat monotonously grey in colour, so that it was difficult to judge of his full range and achievement. In the 19th century, and still more in the 20th, the two schools drifted apart. It is not surprising that the exotic atmosphere of the Pre-Raphaelites found little favour in the eyes of the Russians, trained as they had been in the last forty years in a school of harsh, drab realism. However, the absence of Rossetti was noted with regret. A different kind of exoticism, as seen in the work of the Russian painter Sviatoslav Roerich, whose exhibition was running concurrently with the British one both in Moscow and Leningrad, made a more popular appeal because he interpreted the eastern splendours of India in a technique derived, through his father Nicholas Roerich, from Russian folk sources.

Whistler's work, on the other hand, was greatly admired, though stress was laid on his power of characterisation rather than on his exquisite design and delicate restricted tonality. The work of Steer and Sickert and of other members of the New English Art Club and Camden Town Group was new to the Russians, and their mastery was readily appreciated. The abstract painters of today naturally aroused the most furious arguments and lively interest. The official line that formalistic painting is decadent and meaningless was voiced

by many, but others, particularly the younger students, were intrigued and delighted to see something so fresh and original. The most frequent questions asked about the modern pictures were who bought them, and did they mean anything to the working-class people of England—to cooks and miners, for example? The economics of the western art world must be very difficult to grasp in a society where official patronage is almost the only source of income for artists, and where no auctions are held to establish and stabilise prices.

Older people, who could remember the outburst of artistic experiment in the early days of the Revolution, sometimes protested that our abstract artists were old-fashioned, that it had all started in Russia 50 years ago, and that now they had gone beyond such experiments and reached social realism. Others asked whether there were any realist painters in England and why more had not been included in the exhibition. A small group of painters, including Caryl Weight, Ruskin Spear, Derrick Greaves and Paul Hogarth, had shown their work in Moscow in 1957, under the title *Looking at People*, and there were naturally inquiries as to why they had not been included in the present exhibition, and in general why modern painters do not find subjects in the life of the people.

It appears that the most widely known English painter of the last half-century was Frank Brangwyn because he presented a large collection of his lithographs to the Russian museums, and some surprise was voiced that his work had not been included; several people added that they would like to see an exhibition of modern English graphic art. But underlying all these objections one could not help feeling a deep gratitude for the exhibition, which enabled the Russian people to see a wide and varied display of English painting, which gave them a glimpse of English life and thought and will undoubtedly stimulate further interest and bring about closer intercourse.

Quite a number of people expressed their appreciation of the colour-sense of the younger British artists. From the purely æsthetic point of view it must be remembered that the present generation in Russia has been trained to look at the meaning behind a picture rather than at the painting. In view of this, it is surprising how many people enjoyed the colour of Ivan Hitchens and Terry Frost, and reacted to the designs of Ben Nicholson, Victor Pasmore, Roger Hilton, Bryan Wynter and Ceri Richards. The paintings by Alan Davie were found more difficult to grasp; some compared them to children's paintings and, incidentally, a group of paintings done by children, which I saw in the Hermitage, showed a remarkable freedom of handling and power of imagination, qualities so conspicuously absent in the work of professional Soviet artists. The general verdict on the work of the younger British painters can be summed-up in the often-heard remark: 'It is incomprehensible, but interesting.'

To the English visitor the most striking impression left by the exhibition was the wide range of visitors it attracted. The picture-loving public seems to be drawn from all walks of life and the museum authorities spare no pains to bring art to the people. In Moscow the museum was open till 9 p.m. to enable people to visit it after work. It should be added that no special charge is made for exhibitions in Russia, but there is an admission charge to the museums which includes admission to any current exhibitions. Explanatory leaflets on a few of the principal painters were published by the Russians in addition to the official catalogue, which had been compiled in England. A large number of guide lecturers were specially trained, and John Hilton and I were asked to give them preliminary talks to prepare them for their task of conducting parties round the exhibition. Learned discussions were held by the museum officials, when papers were read on various aspects of English art. On the other hand, there was far less notice in the local press than appeared in this country at the time of the Russian exhibition—in fact nothing more than brief accounts of the

opening and a long article by Chegodaev in the weekly paper *Soviet Culture* entitled 'The Greatness and Decline of English Painting' (the English translation was published in the autumn issue of the *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*.—ED.), in which he expressed his enthusiasm for Constable, on whom he is compiling a book, and his disapproval of modern abstract art.

While the exhibition was being transported from Leningrad to Moscow I conducted a group of London University Extension students on a 10-day visit to both cities. The time-table was planned to cover places of artistic interest, and though it was not possible to include everything that we had hoped to see—for example, Abramtsevo, Archangelskoe and Oranienbaum had to be omitted for lack of time—the party was able to see the principal museums, to visit Zagorsk on Whit-Sunday, and make excursions to Peterhof and Pushkino from Leningrad, and there were plenty of opportunities of going to the opera, ballet, puppets, circus and cinerama. The wealth of material and relative unfamiliarity of Russian art impressed all the serious students and will undoubtedly lead to further study. A meeting arranged by the USSR—Great Britain Society at Friendship House led to interesting contacts and exchanges of books.

SHAKESPEARE IN GEORGIA

Nico Kiasashvili

The author is one of the leading Shakespearian scholars of Georgia and is editor of 'The Georgian Shakespeariana'. His book 'Shakespeare' was published in Tbilisi early this year.

MANY Englishmen in the past in their descriptions of hunting and tourist trips to the Caucasus would also make some mention of Georgia. This small country aroused in almost every traveller delight and amazement at the wealth and abundance of its natural resources, the beauty of its landscapes and the exotic piquant combination of Asiatic and European styles of its capital Tbilisi (which, incidentally, was wrongly called Tiflis). They also occasionally wrote about the interesting history of the long-suffering Georgian people and their ancient culture, about the semi-legendary Queen Tamar and about Shota Rustaveli, the great poet of the 12th-century Georgian renaissance. Yet the descriptions of what they saw remained on the level of cheap exoticism.

Among the few English people who really penetrated to the heart of Georgian culture were Oliver Wardrop and his sister Marjory. They made a long stay in Georgia, and associated with and became friends of the best representatives of the Georgian intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century. They studied and grew to love the people and their spiritual life. The Wardrops' great interest in Georgian culture and their great and sincere love for it resulted in translations into English of outstanding works of Georgian literature, among which Marjory Wardrop's prose translation of Rustaveli's poem *The Knight in the Tiger Skin* and Oliver Wardrop's translation of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's fables* are considered particularly important. The bibliography

* *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, M. S. Wardrop, London, 1912, and *The Book of Wisdom and Lies*. Translated by Oliver Wardrop from the original of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani. Published by B. Quaritch. London, 1894.

of literature on Georgia, carefully compiled by Oliver Wardrop and appended to the book *Kingdom of Georgia*,* and his catalogue of Georgian manuscripts in the British Museum† deserve, in my opinion, particular attention among much else that these two English people did in order to study and popularise Georgian culture.

The Wardrops were among the first English people who had a perfect knowledge of the Georgian language, and this enabled them to be competent critics of what they read and heard ; they had no need to rely on translations, which are so often disastrous for an understanding of the deeply poetical works of one people or another. Both brother and sister were close friends of Ilya Chavchavadze (1837-1907) and Vano Machabeli (1854-98), who were intimately concerned with Georgian Shakespeariana in its very first days.

The high regard which the Wardrops had for the translations into Georgian of Shakespeare's works (particularly those of Machabeli, who brilliantly accomplished the translation of Shakespeare's tragedies which he had begun on the initiative of and in collaboration with the outstanding poet Ilya Chavchavadze) may be clearly observed in the correspondence, preserved in the Georgian National Museum, between the Wardrops and their Georgian friends. In a letter to Vano Machabeli, Oliver Wardrop wrote : ' . . . Your translation of *Julius Caesar* is something to be proud of; it is at once a proof of your own genius and of the wonderful wealth of your language. I have new French, German, Russian, Bulgarian versions of this play, but none of them seems to be faithful as yours. You have done a work that progeny will admire, even if you do not get praise from your contemporaries. I hope you will gradually translate the whole of Shakespeare.'‡

Machabeli's translations are not merely examples of a classical translation of Shakespeare's tragedies ; they are also part of the treasury of Georgian literature equal to the best original works of Georgian writers. Because of their great artistry, these translations have become facts of national Georgian literature.

In contrast to European countries (and especially in contrast to Germany, where Schlegel's translations were prepared and based on a great tradition of translating), there were in Georgia no more or less valuable precedents which Machabeli could follow. True, Shakespeare had been translated in Georgia some time before Machabeli, but in the first place these translations were done from the French and later entirely from the Russian (or often from both languages at the same time), and in the second they were almost all, on the whole, weak from the literary point of view. Machabeli introduced a high degree of professionalism into Georgian translated literature and, possessing great talent as a writer, he succeeded in making his translations seem like original literary works.

The fact that he, together with Chavchavadze, had right from the start selected the correct metric form of Georgian verse for translating Shakespearian poetry contributed a great deal to his success. Since the Georgian language does not have even the remotest lexicographical or grammatical similarity to English (or to Russian or French, from which, as I have mentioned, the earlier translations were made), the translator did not have the same opportunities as, for example, Schlegel, whose translations, due to the similarity of the two languages, sometimes matched the original word for word. The fourteen-syllable Georgian blank verse which perfectly conveys the sense and mood

* *The Kingdom of Georgia: Notes on Travel*. O. Wardrop. (Sampson Low, London, 1888.)

† *Catalogue of Georgian Manuscripts in the British Museum*. London, 1913.

‡ Machabeli's Translations of Shakespeare. An article by Vakhtang Chelidze in *The Georgian Shakespeariana* (in Georgian), Vol. I, Tbilisi, 1959 ; p. 149.

expressed by the iambic pentametre of the original Shakespeare was used in all eight translations (*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Richard the Third*, and *Coriolanus*). This metre, besides correctly conveying the stylistic features of Shakespeare's tragedies, is extremely characteristic of the Georgian language, since it springs from the centuries-old tradition of Georgian poetry.

A careful study of Machabeli's translations impresses the reader with his deep knowledge not only of the English language in general, but of Shakespearian language in particular. Many disputed passages in the original about which commentaries have been written by Shakespearian scholars have found as it were their 'scientific explanation' in Machabeli's translations; in the Georgian version they gain in lucidity and often represent an original and completely convincing interpretation of the Shakespearian text.

Machabeli satisfied the great demand of the Georgian theatre for good productions of Shakespeare's plays by providing it with a suitable form for staging the plays of the great English dramatist. These excellent new translations of Shakespeare's tragedies opened before the Georgian reader and theatre-goer a world of great humanist ideas and feelings capable of stirring not only the Elizabethan spectator but audiences at the beginning of the 20th century as well. In fact, Lado Meskhishvili, the eminent Georgian actor and famous interpreter of the role of Hamlet, was actually inspired, at the end of a performance in Kutaisi, to fight at the barricades against the wrongs of society which had tormented the mind of the Prince of Denmark over the centuries.

Nearly all Shakespeare's best-known plays have been produced on the Georgian stage. Translations have been specially done, perhaps not always successfully, for a particular production of one of Shakespeare's plays or comedies which had not been translated by Machabeli. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and many other Shakespearian plays have been produced at various times in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and many provincial towns and even villages. The Shakespearian repertoire has been largely responsible for the rise of whole galaxies of talented actors and producers who, generation after generation, have brought the art of the Georgian theatre up to our own times.

With the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, work on translations and productions of Shakespeare's plays entered a new phase. Emerging from difficult, almost hopeless, material conditions, the Georgian theatre succeeded in changing over from semi-professional and frequently purely amateur activity to normal, everyday, professional artistic life. The genius of Shakespeare resounded with new strength on its stage. The magnificent figure of the Prince of Denmark and the boisterous character of Sir John Falstaff appeared in turn on the stage of the young Soviet Georgian theatre.

Koteh Marjanishvili's production of *Hamlet* was a great event in the formation and establishment of the new Georgian theatre. Faithful to the rich theatrical traditions of the past, yet enriching them with new contemporary scenic language, this leading Georgian producer created a production which has entered the history of the Soviet theatre as one of the best Shakespearian productions. British readers may be interested to know that Koteh Marjanishvili as a young producer took part in Gordon Craig's production of *Hamlet* in Moscow.* It should be noted, however, that Marjanishvili's Georgian production proved his maturity and independent creative language, which differs essentially from that of Gordon Craig.

Marjanishvili brought up a whole generation of young producers and actors who, after his death, worthily continued his work of developing the art of the Georgian theatre. One of his best pupils, Akaky Khorava, played Othello in

* *My Life in Art*. K. S. Stanislavsky. FLPH, Moscow; p. 389.

the 1940s at the Rustaveli Theatre, and this performance is regarded as an interesting landmark in the history of Soviet Shakespeariana. The famous Russian actor Vasily Kachalov, in a letter to the theatre, expressed his admiration for Khorava's magnificent performance.

New translations of Shakespeare's plays were undertaken in the 1940s and work is still being done in this field. Although Machabeli's translations remain unsurpassed to this day, the Georgian theatre and reading public feel an urgent need for translations of Shakespeare's remaining plays which Machabeli himself did not succeed in doing. Professor Erekleh Tatishvili (1883-1946),* of Tbilisi University, helped to train new people who would carry on in the tradition of Machabeli. He taught his pupils love and true appreciation for Shakespeare's works and a deeply creative approach to them. These new translations (the majority of which were done by G. Gachechiladze and V. Chelidze) are distinguished for their artistry and closeness to the original. There already exists a complete translation of Shakespeare's sonnets† and at the present moment work is going ahead to complete publication of a ten-volume edition of Shakespeare's complete works in Georgian.

These new translations have naturally encouraged many theatres to put on new productions of Shakespeare, and often the theatre itself has engaged someone to translate a play for it. Meanwhile the Georgian theatre has continued its search for new productions of Shakespeare's tragedies in the classical translations of Machabeli.‡ Naturally not all these productions are of equal interest, not all of them can claim originality in the way they have solved the difficult problem of producing Shakespeare in the modern theatre, but the Marjanishvili Theatre's production of *Richard the Third*, for example, was highly praised at the 10-day festival of Georgian art and literature held in Moscow in 1958.

Georgian Shakespeariana is rich not only in theatrical and literary events. Shakespeare is systematically studied in Georgian secondary schools (in Machabeli's translations) and is acted in English by students trying to improve their knowledge of the great poet's native tongue ; other examples could be given.

Shakespearian themes are often reflected in the works of Georgian artists, composers and choreographers. The ballet *Othello* produced at the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre in 1958 was a great occasion in the cultural life of the republic. The composer A. Machavariani, the well-known choreographer and dancer V. Chabukiani and the artist S. Virsaladze together created a production whose importance goes beyond the genre of ballet and is a new contribution to Georgian Shakespeariana as a whole. The ballet *Othello* may be regarded as a summary of the great experience and great tradition of work in the Georgian theatre on Shakespeare and particularly on this tragedy.

After the first successful production in Georgia, this ballet was presented by the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre in Leningrad, with Chabukiani again dancing the main role. I hope that London ballet-lovers will have a chance of seeing this production next year during the visit of the Leningrad Ballet Company.

Various studies of Shakespeare are still being made in Georgia. Georgian translators, scholars, actors and producers are vastly enriching Soviet Shakespeariana and are helping to make the works of the great English playwright increasingly popular among Soviet readers and audiences.

* While still a student at Edinburgh University, E. Tatishvili became acquainted with Marjory Wardrop, who presented him in London with her translation of I. Chavchavadze's poem *The Hermit*.

† *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Translated into Georgian by Givi Gachechiladze. State Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1952.

‡ At the present moment *Hamlet* is being played at the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi.

A VISIT TO THE MERMAID

B. Rostotsky

**We take this short extract from an article by the theatre historian
B. Rostotsky on his visit to Britain in the summer of 1959.**

THE opening of the Mermaid Theatre in London does not in the least contradict reports of the great difficulties the English theatre is facing at the present time. As is well known, the St. James's Theatre closed down, and other theatres, even the biggest of them, are up against great problems. It is usual to talk about the competition of television when discussing the position of the theatre, and to say that the spectator prefers to stay at home, since it is cheaper and more comfortable. There is no doubt that the development of television has had its effect on attendance at theatres. We were told that sometimes not even cinemas are able to withstand the competition of television programmes. But this cannot be the real cause of the trouble, for Bernard Miles succeeded in opening a theatre at a time when even smart West End theatres were finding it difficult to make both ends meet.

And the Mermaid at the moment is almost the most fashionable theatre in London. Yes, to be successful one must be fashionable. But the opposite is just as true : to be fashionable one must be successful. What is the secret of the success of the Mermaid, which has so unexpectedly surfaced and settled down on the very banks of the Thames in London's City ?

Bernard Miles, its director, a distinguished English producer and actor, with whom we had the pleasure of a chat, began his artistic career back in 1930. His acting experience includes work in the theatre (he was a great success in the role of Iago at the Old Vic), in revue, in films, and on television. In 1951 he founded a small experimental theatre in the garden of his London home, but it was not till eight years later, in May 1959, that he was able to open in London a real theatre for the public such as the Mermaid has become.

The local patriotism of City dwellers and workers ensured that the new theatre would meet with a warm reception and public support. It is the first new theatre to be built in London for the last thirty years, and there has not been a theatre at all in the City itself for more than two and a half centuries. Moreover, the Mermaid started on its career in a restored warehouse, destroyed by fascist bombs during the war, and this, too, has contributed to its popularity.

The structure of the theatre, the arrangement of the stage and the character of the design all lead one to think that its principles have much in common with the experimental work of Meyerhold, Okhlophov and Vilar. But it is really not a question of influence, but of certain tendencies common to them all. The auditorium, incidentally, most nearly resembles that of the RSFSR I Theatre in its external appearance. The rough brickwork of the walls, still standing from their warehouse days, has not been covered. It is true that there is a difference : the comfortable seats, upholstered in red, in the amphitheatre present a strong contrast to the texture of the walls. The stage, open on three sides, has no curtain and is almost at ground level. The orchestra, which plays an important part in the performance, is behind the stage. Bernard Miles holds that music is an important factor in the theatre, but this does not mean that the members of the orchestra must be in the foreground and hinder the actors ; the music should be somewhat subdued.

Miles also considers that one of the purposes of the theatre he directs is to revive the link between stage and audience existing in Elizabethan times, but which, he thinks, has been lost in the English theatre of today. He feels that one of the reasons for the popularity of television is precisely the fact that it

enables an atmosphere of intimate friendliness to be created between actor and audience. By doing away with the box-like stage, the producer hopes to compete with television by making use of its own weapons. It must be admitted that this has worked out well in this theatre.

In its greetings to the Moscow Art Theatre last year specially printed in Russian, on the eve of the opening of the Mermaid, we read the following declaration of its creative programme : ' Our theatre will try to develop an invigorating English style, both in production and performance.' To judge from the performance of the opening play, *Lock up your Daughters* (adapted from Henry Fielding's comedy *Rape upon Rape* or *The Justice caught in his own Trap*), running successfully for many months, the theatre managed to achieve this aim. The style of performance of Fielding's comedy could be well defined by the word ' invigorating'. Bernard Miles saturated the play with songs and music, so that in some respects it resembled a musical comedy, without, however, losing its inherent irony.

At the opening of the Mermaid Theatre Bernard Miles received numerous greetings from eminent personalities in the English theatre, including Vivien Leigh, Sir John Gielgud and John Osborne. They looked upon this as a significant attempt to overcome the difficulties which confront British theatre artists at the moment, and which Sir John Gielgud in his letter called phenomenal.

In June of last year artists from the Moscow Art Theatre visited the site of this new theatre in London and elected its company of actors honoured members of their own theatre in Moscow.

We would like to end these notes by wishing the Mermaid's company and its producer success in their plans for creating a theatre which will be close to the general public.

—*Teatr*, No. 11, November 1959

Translated by Kathleen Bird.

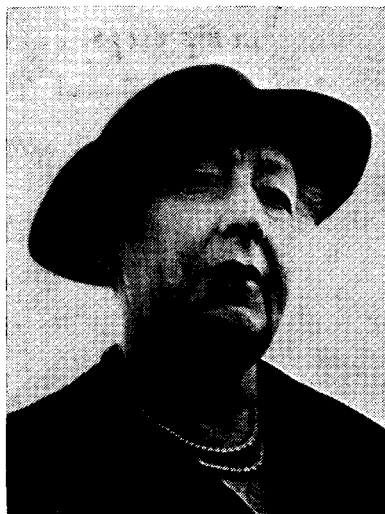
OBITUARY

Monica Whateley

MISS MONICA WHATELEY, an honoured member of the Executive Committee of the SCR, died in September in the 70th year of a life of ceaseless activity for the promotion of equality and good will for men and women throughout the world. She was one of the most interesting and courageous representatives of a generation of British women who rose through the ranks of the militant suffrage movement to become champions not only of women's rights, but of the equality of rights for people of all races regardless of sex, colour, race or creed.

An important part of Monica Whateley's life work was on famine relief, and it was her experience of thousands of people dying of starvation and disease after World War I which gave her the deep social conscience which found practical expression in her many and varied endeavours for the downtrodden and underprivileged in Asia, Europe and America.

In 1956 she visited the Soviet Union to take part in the United Nations seminar on the position of women. As a practising member of the Catholic Church she visited a number of Catholic and Orthodox churches while she was in Moscow, Leningrad and Armenia. On her return to Britain she was able to expose



the falsehoods about the persecution of her religion in the USSR. To the Archbishop's office in London, who had told her that "at present there does not seem to be a Catholic Church open in Moscow", she replied simply that they "should be better informed of the true position of the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union".

Her religion and social understanding meant to her first and foremost peace and good will among all people. She worked ceaselessly as lecturer, organiser, writer and committeewoman for international understanding, and her whole life was a contribution to this cause. Until her final illness, Miss Whateley was meticulous in her attendance at SCR Committee meetings, and always ready with all forms of help and advice, tireless in accepting engagements to lecture about the Soviet Union. Her passing is a great loss to the many causes for which she strove so earnestly, not least the work of our Society for friendship and cultural exchanges between the peoples of Britain and the Soviet Union.

Lipmann Kessel

Surveys and Reviews

ENGLISH BALLET THROUGH RUSSIAN EYES

ROSLAVLEVA'S book *English Ballet* is a well-documented review of the historical and creative development of English ballet from its origin to the end of 1958. It is based on English books, articles and iconography, but she does not always agree with English critics in their evaluation of artistic phenomena and with their views on the art of ballet.

I omit a survey of Roslavleva's history of English ballet because this subject is well known to English readers. They will be more interested, I believe, to see English ballet through Russian eyes. I shall therefore confine myself to an exposition of the author's opinions.

Let me point out at once that she thinks English ballet has made considerable achievements in the short time of its existence in difficult conditions. She pays tribute to the talents of its choreographers and dancers, but finds that their lack of clear purpose and method often spoils the results of their work. It is impossible to give a detailed account of what she thinks of individual artists: the scope of this review will allow me to mention only a few names.

I am sure that the English public, critics and dancers would be particularly interested in what a Russian expert has to say about weak points in English ballet. It is these, probably, that they would like to see improved, provided, of course, that they agree with the criticism. Praise only flatters, but does not help one. Therefore I will touch chiefly upon what Roslavleva regards as the shortcomings of English ballet.

When she criticises them she often quotes some English critic in support of her argument. Here I am not giving these English quotations in their original form. I have retranslated them from the Russian text of Roslavleva's book.

She begins her book with the arrival of Russian dancers and then of Diaghilev's company in England at the beginning of the century, and their growing impact which led to the birth of English ballet. In subsequent chapters she traces their influence on the latter. She particularly emphasises the fact that the creators of English ballet belong to the generation which saw Diaghilev's company in its period of decadence, though she concedes that even then Diaghilev showed real achievement in some instances.

Roslavleva deprecates the uncritical attitude of English ballet masters and critics to everything Diaghilev presented. They made a fetish of him. As an example of this blind worship she says that in the Sadler's Wells production of *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1946 the same distortion of Petipa's choreography and interpolations of Tchaikovsky's music taken from other of his compositions were used as in Diaghilev's presentation of this ballet in 1921. The quartet of precious metals and stones—fairies of gold, silver, diamond and sapphire, Petipa's masterpiece—was replaced, as in Diaghilev's production, by the trio of Florestan and his two sisters. The latter number, put on by Bronislava Nijinskaya only because Diaghilev did not have four ballerinas capable of dancing Petipa's highly technical variations, was arranged by Ashton in a new version for Sadler's Wells. Aurora's coda was transformed into de Valois's version of Nijinskaya's pseudo-Russian dance *Three Ivans*.

On the one hand, says Roslavleva, English ballet masters replace musical numbers and throw out old choreographic masterpieces; on the other, they preserve scenes and dances the archaism of which is obvious. Thus in Act II

of *Swan Lake* they still introduce Benno, the prince's friend, although in the story of the ballet he does not play any essential part, and in the adagio of Act II the presence of a third person destroys the poetry of the love dialogue of Odette and the prince. In the 1895 production at the Maryinsky theatre Benno was kept only for the purpose of helping the ageing Gerdt to support the ballerina. Roslavleva quotes critics to whom such archaisms in English ballet became obvious after the Bolshoi season in 1956.

Sleeping Beauty (1939 production), *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker* were put on by N. G. Sergueev for Sadler's Wells.

Roslavleva states that after the October revolution Sergueev, having abused his official position, opened a safe of the former Maryinsky theatre and took abroad with him 27 notations of ballets made by his assistants Chekrigin and Rakhmanov after Stepanov's method. These choreographic 'scores', adds Roslavleva, served Sergueev as a basis for his welfare for many years of his life abroad.

Roslavleva discusses how in *Cinderella* Ashton made cuts in Prokofiev's score and altered the conception of the ballet in order to produce a grotesque entertainment in which secondary characters—the ugly sisters—became the most important ones, and the stepmother disappeared.

Writing about *Daphnis and Chloe*, Roslavleva points out that, having kept Fokine's libretto, Ashton found a new choreographic solution for this ballet. Its basic idea, as understood by Ashton, was a triumph of the eternity of love as a lofty poetical feeling. In many inspired dances, which revealed Fonteyn's lyrical gift, Ashton succeeded in expressing this idea. But the ballet as an ensemble was not successful because the choreographer did not avoid primitivism and vulgarisation. Thus, wishing to emphasise that the theme of love lives at all times, he dressed his characters in their present-day clothes. Here Ashton showed lack of respect towards the antique original by Longus.

For the same reason his other meeting with antiquity—his ballet *Tiresias*—was also a failure. Although some episodes in it were effective, the action of the ballet was confused and contained frankly erotic elements. It is enough to look at photographs showing separate movements in the ballet to become convinced of Ashton's undoubted talent—his ability to arrange masses, to conceive original *mise-en-scène*, etc.

Roslavleva discusses also his other good points : his looking for dance images in the content of the music ; his lyrical and poetical choreographic 'handwriting', etc.; but then all the more striking become his defects in ideological and artistic thinking. Having reviewed Ashton's other ballets, she comes to the conclusion that he has not yet created a completely successful big ballet, and that one does not need to be a prophet to foretell its creation only when he overcomes his neglect of the problem of content of ideas and imagery conceived as choreographic action.

Roslavleva believes that the contradictions in aims and styles which are apparent in many English ballets are due to the fact that choreographers have no clear purpose and method. 'Decadent philosophical theories', she says, themes concerned with death, pessimism, the digging in the 'subconscious' characteristic of bourgeois literature and art, are bound to affect ballet also. Forgetting that ballet is an art of lofty romanticism, noble and strong passions, deep feelings, English choreographers and scenario writers choose as themes death, madness, lack of faith in the future, crimes and horrors. Even *Rake's Progress*, which belongs to the golden treasury of English ballet, ends with a scene in which excessive attention is paid to details of a clinical picture in a mental asylum.

During the war Ashton's ballet *Dante Sonata*, instead of inspiring people to fight fascism and asserting the idea of the inevitability of victory of the forces of light over the forces of darkness, solved the theme of good and evil as follows:

good and evil were crucified in the finale side by side on two crosses, and during the action the children of darkness defeated the children of light. The idealist conception that there is nothing in the world outside the subjective experiences of man underlies the majority of ballet libretti. So, for example, with Helpmann's short-lived ballet *Adam Zero*, in which are incarnated gloomy and pessimistic ideas of so-called 'English existentialism'. When man-zero Adam Zero, tormented by life in which he sees only horror and despair, wishes to wipe the remaining days of his life off the board, it is refused him to do so. He dies only when death calls for him. This attempt to show in ballet an entire human life and prove its futility did not stand the test of time.

Death conquers in the ballet *Checkmate*. Death is the principal heroine of the ballet *Donald of the Burthens*, and of Ashton's ballet *Don Juan*. Ignoring the programme of Richard Strauss's symphonic poem, Ashton made death a central character in the form of a beautiful woman from whom Don Juan receives the last kiss of his life. Ashton's ballet *Apparitions* ends with a poet's suicide.

The Blue Rose, by a young choreographer, Peter Wright, was influenced by the choreographic étude *Spring Waters*, shown by the Bolshoi dancers. John Cranko's ballet *Angels* was a feeble attempt to repeat Diaghilev's experiments of the decadent period to which this young choreographer is very partial, although he knows them only by hearsay. K. Macmillan's ballet *Nora* reflects certain features typical of 'psychopathological' ballets from the repertoire of the American *Ballet Theatre*. In it the choreographer focused his attention on the hysterical atmosphere of tension and breakdown of a group of doomed people driven together by fate. Even death is better than the agony of uncertainty—such is the only conclusion to which the author of this ballet comes.

In Rodriguez's ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* the principal characters are murderers and a prostitute. They lure clients into their den, rob them and kill them. There are many pornographic details. It is sad that such a low subject was put to the music of Bela Bartok. Critics condemned this ballet. The theme of 'no way out', no faith in the future, breakdown and death continues to permeate the work of the young English choreographers, on whom the leaders of the Royal Ballet lay great hopes. It is possible, says Roslavleva, that when creative forces unite in a single theatre healthier trends, leaning on the best traditions of their national heritage, will appear in English ballet.

The need to create ballets with more significant dramatic content became so obvious after the success of the Bolshoi Theatre in London that the Royal Ballet decided to revive Helpmann's ballets in order to enrich its repertoire. But their choreographic poverty and ideological blind alleys could not satisfy the contemporary English audience, as they have nothing in common with the Bolshoi's artistic productions which appealed to it so much. His *Hamlet* was a mixture of disconnected fragments, and *Miracle in the Gorbals* concentrated one's attention on ugly, criminal and perverted passions.

English ballet lacks big compositions created by national writers, musicians, choreographers and painters; it lacks large scenic canvases devoted to a big idea, big heroes, healthy emotions, deep passions. Such creations would be fruitful, they would cultivate mastery of execution, develop talents, enrich music, deepen choreographic creativeness. This view expressed by Roslavleva is supported by quotations from articles by English critics who particularly emphasised the musicality of Soviet dancers in comparison with the English.

After the Bolshoi season the shortcomings of the English *corps de ballet* became particularly obvious. Thus, Mary Clark found rows of indifferent swans very irritating (*Dance News*, March 1957, p. 6).

The *corps de ballet* was not expressive enough in the 'spellbound' dance of Kaschei's suite in *The Firebird*. According to P. V. Manchester it represented

neat rows of dancers counting on what measure they have to begin (*Dance News*, October 1955, p. 8).

As regards the principal characters in *The Firebird*, however, Roslavleva pays tribute to Margot Fonteyn in the title role, to Ashton as Kaschei, and Michael Soames as the Tsarevich. *Petrushka*, on the other hand, is considered an altogether unfortunate affair. In spite of all the efforts made by Grigoriev and Tchernicheva to revive Fokine's choreography, or rather what remains of it, they failed to infuse into it the most important element—creative life.

Roslavleva speaks highly of Margot Fonteyn. She notes her sense of proportion in emotional expression, fusion of the dance with music, lyrical poetry and nobility of style. But, she adds, only a few English dancers succeed in reaching the real heights of inspired dance.

One of the essential defects of English dancers is inexpressive arms. This has been observed by many critics. For example, P. V. Manchester says that the inability of English dancers to use their arms is the cause of the inexpressiveness of which they are often accused. Too often they dance with their feet only; the body is completely undeveloped and this causes stilt-like movements (*The Rose and the Star*, London 1949, p. 31). A. V. Coton is quoted as saying that the task of English ballet is to develop plastic expressiveness of the entire body based on the traditions of English mime. The same kind of advice is implied in the pronouncements of other critics. For example, Mary Clark finds that with the Russians everything is felt and motivated, every part of the dancer's body responds to music which, as it were, penetrates right through from head to foot. Another journalist came nearer than all others to the essence of the question when he said that these Russians dance as if they knew no other means of locomotion. At the dawn of English ballet, Anna Pavlova spoke of this, urging her pupils to regard the dance as an image of man's life and activity, as 'thinking aloud', and not as a sum of bodily movements.

Roslavleva says: 'All efforts in search of new choreographic forms and original combinations of old ones lead to insignificant results if the principal element is ignored—the soul of the dance. And this danger is undoubtedly apparent in English ballet.'

Mary Clark writes about the more favourable conditions in which Russian ballet artists work: 'They can spend years and thousands on each production. Nothing is hurried. They have a huge company and can use any kind of dancer. They have brilliant young classical dancers, more mature ones, strong ballet artists, middle-aged character dancers, and mimes who according to English standards are aged men and women' (*Dance News*, November 1956, p. 1).

Comparing Lavrovsky's and Ashton's choreography of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mary Clark wrote in *Dancing Times* of November 1956: 'Lavrovsky's contribution transcends the boundaries of mere composition of dance movements, just as Prokofiev's contribution is greater than a composition of music for dances' ('i.e. a usual duty of a composer in an English ballet' interpolates Roslavleva). 'Soviet ballets are so thoroughly and so lovingly put on,' continued Mary Clark, 'and all their components are so closely connected that to tear dances out of context, to disunite them, would mean to destroy a ballet.' She illustrated this idea by the following comparison: 'If we take any fragment from Lavrovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* and compare it with that belonging to Ashton, for example, a scene on the balcony or the duet in the bedchamber, then in every case we must applaud Ashton. But the whole meaning of the Soviet production is that you cannot take a fragment out of it because it is a part of the whole—a remarkable, magnificent and complete incarnation of Shakespeare's play.' She concluded that English choreographers invent original dances, whereas Russians *put on ballets* (Roslavleva's italics).

A. V. Coton wrote of Ashton's *Romeo and Juliet* that it did not convey

feelings and sufferings of the heroes by means of expressive dance and mime and had no dramatic culmination. (*Dance News*, October 1955).

Roslavleva pays tribute to these critics, saying that they have come to the crux of the matter. Every ballet, she says, should be not a mere *divertissement*, but a continuous dramatic action, conditioned by an ideological, musical, pictorial and choreographic conception. All its elements must be related, from the ballerina's performance to the stage mechanic's work. The creation of choreographic plays should be the chief task of English ballet ; all the rest is its product. The Royal Ballet has taken steps to fill this gap.

Even before the appearance of the Bolshoi Ballet in London, at the time when only individual Soviet dancers had been seen by the British public, Mary Clark wrote that the inspired joy of the dance which was so brightly felt in Russian ballet artists infecting the audience was almost unknown in Sadler's Wells (*Ballet Sadler's Wells*, p. 20).

The influence which the Bolshoi ballet might have on English choreographic art was discussed by Marie Rambert, as reported by Derek Kartun in his article 'The Season of the Bolshoi Theatre Ballet in London', printed in *Sovetskaya Kultura* of November 16, 1956 : 'First,' said Marie Rambert, 'it will help us to understand that one must dance with the entire body. Secondly, we will learn that the dance must be inspired, that we must enjoy it. Thirdly, we must fill the male classical dance with more strength and energy. Lastly, it will teach us the art of mime in a considerable degree.' According to Rambert, English choreography has for a long time been under the influence of Diaghilev's idea that everything in ballet should be expressed only in the dance, avoiding mime altogether. 'After I had seen the Bolshoi's *Giselle*,' said Mme. Rambert, 'I began to understand what great meaning an element of mime has in the dance. Mime in Russian ballet does not interfere with the progress of the dance. It expresses the mood, just as the dance does.' Margot Fonteyn expressed this idea even more concretely after seeing *Romeo and Juliet* with Ulanova : 'We have now understood what we lack.' Quoting these words, Roslavleva says : 'The ability to rise to such self-criticism does honour to Margot Fonteyn and the entire Royal Ballet. Only a healthy, growing artistic organisation is able to see not only its qualities but also its defects.' Roslavleva takes into consideration the fact that English ballet was born and has grown up in conditions unfavourable for a full-blooded development. Its daily life depends on purely commercial considerations. No matter what the cherished ideas of its ballet masters, the decisive factors are the funds and the financial perspectives. Every step forward is accompanied by two steps sideways. We must appreciate the noble efforts of the company that has risen to the present height under these circumstances. In spite of limited financial means, the Royal Ballet has managed to depart from Diaghilev's tradition of one-act ballet, which used to be regarded as an expression of contemporary spirit with its accelerated rhythms. Actually, the one-act ballet was forced on Diaghilev by his life 'on wheels'—the absence of a permanent company and school, limited financial means, ready music, etc. But the most pernicious influence of Diaghilev on English ballet is seen by Roslavleva in his chase after modernistic forms and neglect of sound content during his decadent period, which eventually led his worshippers to empty abstractions.

Looking back, concludes Roslavleva, we see what a long road English ballet has travelled. Not long ago it was patronised only by a small group of fans. Now it is beginning to be loved by a large public, who expect it to respond to the ideas of our times, to the longings of the people.

Let English choreographers create a spectacle expressing their people's love of nature, of adventure, of English poetry. Let them create ballets reflecting the spirit of Shakespeare's tragedies and the humour of English comedy. Let them fill their new ballets with features of national character. There are praise-

worthy tendencies in these directions. In her lecture to the Royal Society of Arts on May 29, 1957, Ninette de Valois particularly emphasised that the Royal Ballet should pay attention to folk and character dances in the theatre and school curriculum. Perhaps the next generation of choreographers will use our own national dances, she said, adding that it was necessary to have real contact between the theatre and folk dancing and that this would be their next big task.

Such attention to character dances in ballet is undoubtedly due to the appearance of Soviet dancers in London. Their performance of the Cracovienne in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, the academic Hungarian and Spanish dances in *Swan Lake*, made English ballet masters realise the possibilities of character dances as a very important factor in ballet.

Furthermore, the full-blooded life of classical ballets on the English stage, and Tchaikovsky's and Delibes's emotional music, which gives so much joy to the audience in Covent Garden, are a proof of the triumph of realistic trends in the art of the English ballet. And this is its promising future.

V. K.

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THE UNVEILING OF UZBEK WOMEN

Sisters. Askad Mukhtar, tr. D. Skvirsky.
(FLPH.)

EAST of Samarkand, and south of the Hunger Steppe, the upper waters of the Syr-Darya (Jaxartes) flow through the delectable valley of Farghana, today one of the richest cotton and silk producing regions of Central Asia. To the markets of its prosperous towns the collective farms send their loads of sweet melons, grapes and peaches, pomegranates, apples and apricots. The chaikhana—tea houses—are crowded with Uzbeks and Tajiks, many in the traditional gaily striped robes; and in the similarly crowded eating houses the air is savoury with shashlik roasted on sticks, and golden shurpa, a soup filled with cuts of mutton, peas and other vegetables.

The abundance of the Farghana valley, with its rich oases, was described five centuries ago by Babur (a descendant of the conqueror Timur), who founded the Moghul dynasty in India. Babur wrote his memoirs and, after he had been driven from Central Asia, described nostalgically the gardens of his homeland, where tulips and roses grew in profusion; the renowned pomegranates and apricots; the pheasants so fat that four persons could dine off one and still not finish it; the turquoise mines; the fine textiles; and the meadows, sheltered and pleasant, where travellers loved to rest.

But the people of pre-revolutionary, semi-feudal Central Asia enjoyed none of this abundance. The handloom weavers—the hereditary occupation of the villages—died of lung trouble before they were forty. The girls were sold into marriage from the age of ten to husbands to whom they were virtually in bondage. Women cowed under the servile paranjah, and could go out from their women's quarters only with the chachvan, a black horsehair veil, hiding their faces. To the physical misery of the people—and especially the women—were added the superstitions of mediaeval Islam, encouraged by the beys and mullahs, the lords and the clergy.

Sisters is a novel by the Uzbek writer and poet Askad Mukhtar, who describes the weavers of one of his native Farghana towns. In the dust and poverty of the summer of 1921 the women begin to see the way to a human existence opened up by the Revolution. Young mothers, with children to support and protect, bereaved in the civil war, and grannies shrivelled like dried peaches and worn thin like old slippers, struggle against their own ignorance and emerge from their paranjahs to help build

the first textile mill in their town. The pioneer women who threw off their paranjahs in Central Asia were stoned, stabbed, and even buried alive by agents of the beys. So too the 'Sisters' had their martyrs, victims of the agents of counter revolutionaries, bands of whom roamed the southern mountains until 1926, when the defeated remnants fled to Afghanistan. Among the numerous difficulties faced frequently with gaiety and wit by these courageous women was that of distinguishing between friends and the plausible enemy who planned sabotage and concealed it under ostentatious labour and a ready flow of slogans.

Perhaps the most delightful evidence today of Central Asia's advances is seen in the unveiled dusky faces of the women, framed in black plaits (and, according to the local poets, as beautiful as the moon when it is full), who can be seen walking freely in the streets of their cities and villages.

More translations of historical novels like *Sisters* would be welcome—especially the works of Sadriddin Aini, the Tajik writer of old and new Central Asia.

K. HOOKHAM.

PROLETARIAN HUMANISM

On Literature. Selected articles. Maxim Gorky, (FLPH, 1960. 397pp. 10/-). Available from Central Books.)

THIS is a new selection made from Gorky's articles, speeches, literary portraits and letters covering the whole of his career. It is not the same as the volume published in Russian in 1937, under a similar title, nor any other collection. Some of the items have appeared before in English, in such volumes as *Literature and Life* (Hutchinson, 1946) and *Fragments from my Diary* (Penguin), but the present selection is unrivalled as an introduction to Gorky's views on life and literature and particularly on the relation between the two.

The concept of 'proletarian humanism', which Gorky defended so vigorously in the thirties, flaying the western intelligentsia for having deserted as outmoded the very humanism it had itself created, is not explicitly referred to in this volume (as it is in the Hutchinson volume), it is true, but it is throughout implicit, and underlies that of 'active romanticism', and of 'socialist' as distinct from 'critical' realism (which Gorky is far from rejecting, be it said). It also underlies his repeated attacks on 'philistinism'. His brilliant speculation on the relationship of the individual to society (*The Disintegration of the Personality*) has not lost its significance in the half-century

since it was written. Far from it! Gorky's prophecy of an increase in philistinism, with its accompanying impoverishment of the self, and of various forms of anti-social behaviour stemming from an unstable personality, has, unfortunately, come to pass in our own society.

The *Short Talks on Craftsmanship* (1930-33) are autobiographical in manner—as are, for that matter, most of the items in this collection. They are invaluable for the study of Gorky's 'iron-men', those self-confident and colourful *entrepreneurs* who figure in his novels.

In his address to the Writers' Congress (1934), Gorky rubs in the contradiction between 'bourgeois' and 'culture' with tireless zest, and claims, with some justification, that the 'rogue' type of hero is the true hero of the western novel, the rogue being the simplest expression of the individual who pits himself against society. He brings to bear on such topics as this not only his sociological speculations, but a knowledge of the history of European literatures which would have graced a professor of comparative literature.

His translators, Julius Katzer and Ivy Litvinov, have had no small task in following him in his innumerable references to western writers, scientists and public figures. They are to be congratulated on their accuracy. I noticed only Zacconné for Zaccane (p. 49), Low for Law (p. 239), Ustrique for Oustric (p. 239), Vieldrack for Vildrac (p. 373) and a misleading reference to Bourget's *Le Disciple* (p. 196). The unusual word 'feral' (fierce, savage) appears disconcertingly two or three times, but the style, generally speaking, is idiomatic and natural, making for easy reading.

It is a pity that an indication is not always given when a text is incomplete. Only the second half of the first item (*How I studied*) is given, but no mention is made of the fact.

J. S. SPINK.

ICONS AND RUBLEV

Drevnerusskaya zhivopis' v sobranykh gosudarstvennoy Tretyakovskoy Galereyi. GIII, Moscow, 1958.

Andrey Rublev. M. V. Alpatov. (Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1959.)

IT is only 35 years since the death of N. P. Kondakov, who inaugurated modern research in Russia on Byzantine archaeology and history of art.

Despite the 'exceptional activity of Russian Byzantinists', in the words of Prof. Ostrogorsky, during this period, the knotty question of the influence of Byzantine art on Russian icon and fresco paintings is far from solved. The Moscow exhibition of these paintings in 1913, the first of its kind ever held in Russia, started off serious art-historical work on the subject. Significantly enough, it was literally on the morrow of the Revolution, in 1918-1925, that the pioneering task was started, under Prof. Grabar, of cleansing and restoring the work painted by or attributed to Rublev, the Russian Fra Angelico and a contemporary of Jan Van Eyck.

The exceptionally fine reproductions (65) in the publication of medieval painting in the Tretyakov Gallery range from the 11th-century Byzantine *Our Lady of Vladimir* through interesting specimens of the Kiev, Vladimir, Suzdal, Novgorod and Moscow schools to *Our Lady of the Closed Orchard*, identified four years ago as painted by a serf about 1670. By then the lay art begins to develop and the icon-painting soon deteriorates to the level of a mere craft. A. Svirin provides a brief but clear introduction to the volume, which has also four pages of useful notes on the reproduced paintings.

Although serious study of Byzantine and Russian iconography in Russia is, as indicated, of recent date, enough is known to enable one to speak of a common tradition—as can also be seen in the volume under review—in this rigidly regulated religious art. Thus individual or collective artists,

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many anonymous, whether in Constantinople or Moscow, were trying with their own specific means to solve pictorially essentially similar functional and symbolic tasks, while conforming to the general imprint of ancestral Byzantium.

This art reached its highest point of development in Russia at the turn of the 14th century in the work of Theophanes the Greek and his younger assistant Rublev. The latter was born some time between 1360 and 1370 and, as it were, to be on the safe side, the 600th anniversary of his birth will be celebrated in the USSR in 1960-70. A special session of the Soviet Academy of Fine Arts is scheduled for the purpose. Prof. Alpatov's 33 pages of a penetrating study of Rublev's opus with 60 (badly produced) illustrations was published within the framework of these celebrations. The study brings out in a striking juxtaposition formal as well as national and even philosophical features in the work of the great Greek and, as Alpatov asserts, his by no means imitative pupil, Rublev, whose art is shown as inspired and, in its turn, inspiring the beginning (in the battle of Kulikovo Pole in 1380) of historical movement for national liberation of Russians against the Mongol occupation parallel to the process of unification round Moscow of feudal principalities in the course of the 15th century. With these methodological means Alpatov subtly analyses Rublev's masterpiece *Trinity*, which, unfortunately, was not shown in the Burlington Gallery last year.

S. OSIAKOVSKI.

ICONS IN COLOUR

Icons. Edited by Tamara Talbot Rice. (Batchworth Press—Books for Pleasure Ltd., 198pp., illustrated. 63/-.)

THIS is a magnificently produced album. It was printed in Czechoslovakia and its main attractions are naturally the 65 plates of reproductions, in colour, of Russian icons. They range from the second part of the 14th century to the 17th century, with the school of Novgorod occupying the pride of place in the earlier part of this period and the school of Moscow and, in particular, the Stroganov school shown in chosen specimens of mainly 16th and 17th century respectively.

The letterpress is in English, German and French, which is obviously meant to widen the appeal of the album, perhaps as the viewers' first encounter with Russian religious art. In this respect the selection is somewhat lopsided. It shows so many Novgorodian icons that, so to speak, it swamps the album and misleads the first viewer as to the relative importance of Novgorod; and does this doubly so by omitting to reproduce work of Theophanes, who although Greek by origin helped to create a genuinely Russian school in that city.

The lopsidedness is further increased by a complete elimination from the album of the work of Andrey Rublev, such as the world-famous *Trinity*. This is particularly incomprehensible in 1960, which has inaugurated the 600th anniversary celebrations of the greatest Russian icon painter's birth. Even the reproduction of half a dozen plates of icons of the Deesis cycle attributed to the school of Rublev can hardly compensate for this sin of selection, the more so because the *Trinity* is rightly described by Mrs. Talbot Rice in her short introduction to the volume as Rublev's 'best known work'.

One of the four pages of that introduction is devoted to the great Russian scholar Kondakov, whose classical work *The Russian Icon* was published in Oxford in 1927, two years after his death. This work served evidently as a basis for the trilingual descriptions of the plates at the end of the album. These are valuable, and enhance our comprehension of and sheer delight in the colourful art of medieval Russia.

S. OSIAKOVSKI.

VAKHTANGOV'S LEGACY

The Vakhtangov School of Stage Art. Nikolai Gorchakov, tr. G. Ivanov-Mumjier. (FLPH. 206pp. Illustrated. Available from Central Books.)

THIS book is the recollected experiences of an actor-director who worked with Vakhtangov in his last years and when he was beginning to break away from the Moscow Art Theatre. It is divided into two parts, the first showing Vakhtangov as a teacher, the second describing the actual production of Gozzi's *Turandot*. There are 40 illustrations, some in colour, though no list of them is given at the beginning, nor is there any index at the end.

The first part makes interesting reading in the light of modern American 'method' acting as practised in the numerous little groups of actors in London working along the lines of the Stanislavsky system. Certain remarks attributed to Vakhtangov would seem to contradict much that the 'method' actors practise. For instance, 'Why persuade yourself that there are no spectators? After all, you're acting for them, not for yourself. This forcible alienation from the audience is senseless, it contradicts the very essence of acting' . . . and 'Etudes (improvisations) are for the sole purpose of enabling *emotion* to arise from *action*. These are not my words, they're Stanislavsky's'.

Gorchakov describes in detail Vakhtangov's use of improvisation in acting classes and even during final rehearsals. Particularly stimulating is the section dealing with rehearsals of Chekhov's *Wedding*, with the quadrille becoming a wild, exhausting exercise in mental concentration during violent physical action. Ideas flashed from Vakhtan-

gov were immediately elaborated, or discarded and replaced by others which in turn sparked off others. The picture is built up, during these early classes, of a man of fertile and brilliant imagination, a man of vision and energy, who commanded the respect and love of his pupils.

The second half is fascinating to me, as a producer, for it deals with the production of a play from the first rehearsal to the opening night, under conditions which no English actor enjoys—the search for the right style, the logical extension of this style in costumes and scenery, the conducting of rehearsals in an atmosphere of discipline and respect, the hundred and one problems that beset an actor working in an unfamiliar convention. The settings and costumes by Nevinsky for this production have become world-famous; here one can read how they were evolved and why, how the actors used them, how 'business' arose out of the properties, and how from the very first the intention was to make the audience feel a deep affection for 'their' actors.

If the writing of the book is marred by a certain naïveté and heavy-handed archness, nevertheless the central figure remains unblurred, and Vakhtangov emerges as a truly inspired man of the theatre.

ANDRÉ VAN GYSEGHEM.

THE BIRCH TREE GIRLS

The Beryozka. Natalia Roslavleva. (FLPH. 104pp. Illustrated. 4/6. Available from Central Books.)

THE great merit of Natalia Roslavleva's book on the 'Beryozka' is that it fully captures the enthusiasm, spirit and conviction with which these charming artists put across their programme of theatricalised folk-dance. None of their audience will forget the excitement of their first performance at the old Stoll Theatre in 1954 and the violent discussions on 'how do they do it?' which took place in every dancing school. The unusual qualities of their opening item, *Beryozka*, with its stately grace, charm and intense musicality, took everyone by delighted surprise, which deepened as each further item disclosed yet another aspect of the rich variety of their repertoire.

Roslavleva's book discloses the means and materials by which these dancers are trained and how their programme is built under the direction of Nadezhda Nadezhkina. First comes an analysis of dances in their repertoire, with a valuable exposition on the background of knowledge required before such items can be appreciated by the dancers themselves. This is followed by a discussion on the technique required to communicate the meaning of each item to an audience. It is not surprising to learn that the daily

class in classical ballet is a 'must' for these highly skilled artists.

Discussions on music, costumes and the production of a new repertoire occupy a prominent place, and finally there come thumbnail sketches of the dancers themselves and their tours.

The book is that of an enthusiast, who conveys, through her extremely well-chosen words and vivid descriptions, her enthusiasm to the readers and makes us long to see these delightful artists, both tall and short, grave and gay, lyrically stately or tomboyishly frivolous, once more in England.

JOAN LAWSON.

ANIMAL TRAINER

Durov and his Performing Animals. Emmanuel Dvinsky. (FLPH. 128pp., illustrated, 3/6. Available from Central Books.)

AN enjoyable book which carries one through all kinds of animal techniques, both in their relations to the human and likewise the human to the animal. The publishers call it 'literature for young people', and its strongest appeal will be for the younger teenagers, when so many of them have their earliest enthusiastic animal

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affections. Nevertheless it will interest and entertain all who can read.

The book tells of the lives of the many varied animals and birds, large and small, that dwell, and have dwelt, in the house of Vladimir Durov, who was for 50 years a circus performer and was the first circus artist to receive the title of Honoured Artist. The first chapter briefly tells of several incidents in the eventful life of Durov.

The house of Durov is somewhat different from a zoo or menagerie, but is most certainly a home for animals, wherein their behaviour is studied, both in training and in play. The house includes an animals' theatre, where many of the animals become accomplished and popular performers. The descriptions of their many 'acts' are most enjoyable and indicative of the subtle ingenuity of their trainers. For most people the training of animals is something of a mystery, and so very much is assumed to be cruelty; however, the diary and details of training given show how the lives of the privileged occupants of the house of Durov can be changed from an otherwise dull, lazy, idle existence to something lively and exciting and the development of their intelligence for all to enjoy.

The cover design is good and stylish, but I should have liked to have seen the many excellent pictures better reproduced; such a book needs good pictures.

HORACE KING.

THREE BOOKS BY IVAN MAISKY

Ispania 1808-1917 (Spain, 1808-1917). I. M. Maisky. (Izdatelstvo 'Akademii' Nauk SSSR, Moscow, 1957. 454pp. 19r10k.)

Mongolia Nakanune Revolutsii (Mongolia on the Eve of Revolution). I. M. Maisky. (Izdatelstvo Vostochnoi Literatury, Moscow, 1959. 310pp. 15r.)

Vospominania Sovetskogo Posla v Anglii (Reminiscences of a Soviet Ambassador in Britain). I. M. Maisky. (Izdatelstvo Instituta Mezhdunarodnykh Otnoshenii, Moscow, 1960. 144pp. 4r.)

EACH of these three works by Academician I. M. Maisky, from 1932 to 1943 Ambassador of the USSR in Great Britain, is connected intimately with some particular aspect of his service to his country. Between them they display his wide range of interests, considerable scholarship and—in the last-named book particularly—quiet sense of humour.

During the Spanish civil war, Ambassador Maisky upheld with distinction the interests of the USSR—and with them those of the Spanish Republic and (as it turned out) of world peace—in the misnamed 'Non-intervention Committee'. His interest in Spain was not that of a mere career diplomat, however; and this clearly and simply written history, based on lectures delivered

at Moscow University between 1948 and 1953, is the result. It is based on much research, which has included a good deal of work in the diplomatic archives of Tsarist Russia, not used previously by scholars. The period of over a century which it covers was not chosen by chance. It begins with the economic, social and political condition of Spain on the eve of Napoleon's invasion of Spain—the prelude to the people's war out of which came the first great revolutionary democratic upheaval in Spain. It ends with the years of decay of the old régime (1898-1917) after Spain's defeat at the hands of the United States—years which led first to military intervention in Spanish politics on an increasing scale and then to the revolution of 1931 and the victory of the People's Front in the elections of 1936.

Need one add that the book has quite a marked bearing on the events of today?

In the spring of 1919 Maisky was in charge of an expedition to what was then known as Outer or Autonomous Mongolia, on behalf of the Irkutsk office of the Soviet Central Union of Co-operative Societies, to purchase cattle on a large scale and to investigate the possibilities of developing Soviet-Mongolian trade. Staying in the country for well over a year, Maisky made a thorough study of its geography, its people and their various problems, its economy and political structure. In 1921 he embodied the results in a substantial volume, *Contemporary Mongolia*—for which, as he notes, he received a royalty 'in the spirit of the times': 10lb. of butter and 2 poods (72lb.) of flour. The present book, bringing up to date much of that volume (both the Mongolian People's Republic and Mongolian studies are very different from what they were 40 years ago), yet retains a great deal of the material which sought, as Maisky writes, to give 'a truthful picture of the old feudal theocratic Mongolia on the eve of its destruction'.

Now that the existence of the MPR has begun to be noticed by even the most obtuse and hidebound of diplomatic services, it is surprising that no publisher has so far been enterprising enough to produce an English edition, which by its extensiveness and thoroughness would be a unique contribution to knowledge in this country.

The third book is, of course, particularly interesting to British readers; and its shortness, as compared with the other two, should not mislead. It deals with only 17 months of Maisky's work as Ambassador—from October 16, 1932, to February 16, 1934. In fact, it is the story of the Anglo-Soviet discussions about a new trade agreement in place of that denounced by Mr. Baldwin's Government on the first of these dates—and it is the first intimate account by a Soviet Ambassador, at such length, of negotiations in which he participated.

One of the illusions most prevalent among people over, say, 50 is that matters which were common knowledge 30 years ago are

equally well known to a later generation. This is not so ; and for that reason Maisky's description of the Versailles system and the changes it underwent (pp. 7-11), and of the interplay of political forces in Great Britain which determined Anglo Soviet relations in the '30s (pp. 11-25, 49-54, 120-2), would even by themselves make the book very useful. But its special purpose—a sober and shrewd exposition of the day-to-day technique of diplomatic negotiation (a subject rarely dealt with by either memoir-writers or historians, by the way)—gives it particular importance. The fact that it is illuminated by a Marxist appraisal of the circumstances at each stage, and his lively description of diplomatic manners and customs in Moscow in those days (pp. 61-7), should give it additional interest.

There are a number of passages, incidentally, which are a useful reminder (pp. 38, 57-8, 68-9, 74-6, 82-3, 97-8) that bullying the USSR is not a very productive occupation when foreign subjects are on trial in its courts.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN.

TRADE WITH S.E. ASIA

Soviet Trade with South-East Asia. D. Vasilev and K. Lvov. (FLPH. 112pp., 30 illustrations, 1/3. Available from Central Books.)

ALL economists are not always wrong. In *The Economics of 1960* Colin Clark predicted that the USSR would then be an exporter of manufactures and an importer of foodstuffs. At the time (the book was published in 1942) many of his colleagues were inclined to mock.

This little book is evidently intended for 'promotion' of Soviet exports, mainly of machinery, for the countries of South-East Asia. The list of goods available includes also what, in the context, are luxury articles, such as electric coffee percolaters.

In some ways even more important for the countries concerned is the offer of a stable market for their products. Besides industrial raw materials, such as jute and rubber, the USSR is now importing rice. It would certainly be an inestimable advantage to the region and, it seems, reasonable all round if Soviet citizens were to eat rice as a luxury when there was a surplus and left it for those to whom it is a necessity when there was not.

The straightforward catalogue of goods available (illustrated with photographs) is prefaced by a somewhat crude account of the wicked plots of the imperialists. The book carries the usual request of the Foreign

Languages Publishing House for suggestions. I should like to suggest that a strong case is most convincing when left to speak for itself.

JOAN ROBINSON.

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Life in the Twenty-first Century. Edited by M. Vassiliev and S. Goushev. (Souvenir Press. 231pp. Illustrated. 21/-.)

TWENTY-NINE Soviet scientists, each an authority in his own field, have predicted the advances the year 2007 will see, based on their present researches.

They include I. P. Bardin, the father of the Soviet metallurgical industry, D. I. Shcherbakov, the explorer and geographer, and A. V. Winter, who advised Lenin on the drawing up of the famous Goelro electrification plan after the October revolution. The book presents their vision of the next 40-odd years.

In a splendid foreword, the president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, A. N. Nesmayanov, who is also one of the world's greatest organic chemists, urges scientists to dream.

He writes : ' . . . without dreams, man, the scientist included, is inevitably halted in his progress . . . One must cultivate this capacity in oneself—one must learn to dream and so co-ordinate the work of today with the problems of tomorrow.'

From dreams which seem to have their feet on the ground the future is mapped out in exciting detail.

By the end of the century return flights to the moon will become commonplace, with its natural wealth being used.

The exploration of the solar system will be well under way, and on earth there will be great advances in exploring under the seas.

Underground coal mining will have ended, and the earth will bloom with plenty for all.

Cancer will be as uncommon as smallpox in western Europe today. Automation will lighten toil and the four-hour day will be universal.

The whole book breathes boldness and confidence in the system of society under which the authors are working, and is an admirable exposition of the outlook of scientists in the Soviet Union today.

A slight blemish on an otherwise excellent job is the peculiar transliteration of some Russian names—Lvov for Lvov, Nessmayanov for Nesmayanov, and Vinter for Winter.

JOHN MOSS.

CENTRAL ASIA PAST AND PRESENT

Russian Central Asia 1867-1917. Richard A. Pierce. (University of California Press, CUP. 360pp. 56/-.)

Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia. Geoffrey Wheeler. (Institute of Race Relations, OUP. 66pp. 6/-.)

Kirghizia Today. Victor Vitkovich. (FLPH, 270pp. 9/-. Available from Central Books.)

Socialist Culture of Uzbek People. T. N. Kari-Niazov. (Oriental Publishing House, Moscow. 70pp.)

How the National Question has been solved in the USSR. Victor Yefanov. (Uzbek State Publishing House, Tashkent. 72pp. Illustrated.)

IN the 19th century, the 'great game' was played out between the imperialist powers Britain and Russia for domination over Central Asia, the British approaching from the south through India, the Russians from the north. The Central Asian khanates became Imperial Russian colonies and vassals.

Pierce gives a useful account, based in the main on original sources, of this period of colonisation; he refers mainly, however, to aspects of administration. The facts given in this lucid volume illustrate the measure of double exploitation endured by the peoples of Central Asia, who suffered under their own feudal beys and bore the additional burden of the Tsarist colonisers. They illustrate at the same time the degree to which Central Asian peoples were drawn into more advanced streams of development through contact with Russian working people, scientists and writers.

The volume dutifully repeats in the introduction and conclusion the official U.S. view on Soviet 'colonisation' in this area, but these comments in fact fall outside the scope of this work.

Col. Wheeler's pamphlet is neither what its title states nor what its introduction claims it to be—an 'objective picture'. A slight historical introduction is followed by an even slighter 'account' of Soviet policy, in which the terms racial, national and Muslim tend to be used indiscriminately. After this the author feels entitled to pronounce judgment: 'Viewed dispassionately and without regard to the high-sounding moral and ethical claims for and denunciations of it made by supporters and opponents of the Soviet régime, the Soviet nationalities policy appears simply as a new and materially more efficient form of colonisation.'

He notes the remarkable developments in Central Asia and the improvement of living standards to levels (quoting a United Nations report) 'much higher than in neighbouring Asian countries', but then remarks 'How far these achievements reflect the efforts and wishes of the Muslim peoples is another matter.'

The two pamphlets by Soviet authors show what the Central Asian peoples themselves

think both of the material improvement of their lives and of their exciting cultural developments. Happily they do not pretend to false objectivity. They are enthusiasts, who are proud of current successes and eager for further progress in the same direction. So too is Victor Vitkovich, whose warmheartedness is infectious and who in describing Kirghizia today communicates his love of Central Asia and pride in the new life unfolding there. Kirghizia is the frontier land of the Celestial Mountains—the Tien Shan, and the Pamirs—the central point of earth and sky', which the Buddhist pilgrim who crossed these great ranges in the seventh century A.D. found to be infested with dragons; it is the land of the famed oases in the Farghana valley, and the Hot Lake, the Issik-kul, one of the deepest of Asia.

The author not only tells the traveller what to expect today, but describes the region and its people of yesterday. For here, less than a generation ago, according to the author's own experiences, witch doctors were still practising their black arts, and a lad could be knifed by the agents of the beys for daring to drive a tractor. This is a well-written, finely illustrated book. Vitkovich, like his own hero, Korzhenevsky, one of the early explorers of the region, makes us feel that we are 'in contact with living history'.

K. HOOKHAM.

MOTORING . . .

My Road to Moscow and Yalta. Robert Bell. (Alvin Redman. 15/-.)

IT is no fault of the author of this handy little guide for motorists that it met only part of the requirements of tourists on wheels in the Soviet Union last season. Since it went to press Intourist has extended the motoring routes equipped to handle foreign car traffic by several thousand miles so that it is now possible to enter the USSR by four land routes—from Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Finland—and to find on the roads the standard of services described fairly adequately by Mr. Bell. And the time is near when the Caucasian detour, which many foreign residents in the Soviet Union know well already, will be equipped for tourists. Moreover, the introduction of cheap 'camping' rates at roughly 7/- a day has given an altogether different complexion to car touring.

Mention should be made, too, of another important change since this book was written. Insurance, the premium payable either in Soviet or other currencies, may now be arranged very conveniently at the point of entry.

As a travelling companion, this guide is somewhat less sophisticated than most readers of this journal would probably require. It is rather disconcerting to read that in Warsaw an 'air of despondency per-

vaded everything' (next time Mr. Bell visits the Polish capital I recommend him to drop into the cafes and wine-cellar in the Old City). More than surprising, too, to read that Lenin has been discredited along with Stalin, or that the tomb in which both are embalmed is black, that Russians are not permitted to dine at the National Hotel restaurant in Moscow, that Russia is not a wine-growing country, that borsch is made of cabbage. A list of the author's inaccuracies, tasteless trivialities and often downright solecisms—he spells gendarmes gens-darme and refers to defectors as defectives—would be very long indeed. On the other hand, where he is simply restating the facts that Intourist have provided he is accurate and objective, though, as I wrote above, he has, through no fault of his own, been made quite out of date by the rapid advance in tourist facilities in the USSR.

RALPH PARKER.

... TO THE USSR

Destination Moscow. G. Mair. (Herbert Jenkins. 200pp. Illustrated. 21/-)

'AN invaluable book to all who intend to visit Russia' says the blurb. Unfortunately, from the point of view of practical detail the account of a trip to

Moscow in 1958 is as out of date by 1960 as the Blue Streak.

In chapter 8, for instance, Mr. Mair mentions 25 roubles per day pocket-money, which has long since been abolished. Or in reproducing the Intourist menu from which tourists select dishes according to the value of their voucher he does not explain that his English equivalents are at the official rate of 11.20. Anyone wishing to exceed the stipulated sum would pay at the tourist rate of 27.60 to £1, and therefore the portion of fresh caviare costs 10/- and not £1¼/- as stated.

The same remarks apply to the list of prices on page 142, where not only is the exchange value incorrect but the prices themselves appear unusual. The everyday tea-glass holder used everywhere in the USSR costs 25 roubles, not 84. In 1955, when prices were higher, I bought a base-metal cigarette case with the Kremlin embossed for nine roubles. In GUM and other souvenir shops there are delightful wooden spoons, ashtrays and egg-cups in red, black and gold lacquer for two, three and five roubles. Carved wooden figurines of pecking birds, owls that raise their wings, bears, etc., cost five or ten roubles—and 10 roubles is 8/- to the tourist, not 18/-!

When the Mairs travelled by car in 1958 an interpreter met them on the frontier and remained with them throughout the tour.

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Today the traveller sees the Intourist representative on the border to receive his coupons, and proceeds onward unaccompanied. The Mairs, too, seem to have been most unfortunate in their guide. Intourist interpreters are generally highly praised for their helpfulness and tact. 'Valerie', however, appears as unbending as a ramrod and the humourless embodiment of a 'communist' caricatured in the *Daily Mail*. 'You two. Get into the restaurant and start eating. It is typical of your capitalist insolence that you keep people like us waiting for you . . .' were the words with which she greeted her clients in Minsk. Her conversation and attitude remain on the same level throughout the book, in which it plays a preponderant part.

Apart from such inaccuracies, Mr. Mair gives interesting accounts of a People's Court and of his visit to a hospital. His descriptions of the places visited are vivid and well-written. Yet throughout one feels how prejudice and preconceived ideas have coloured his whole approach. When crossing the Pripet Marshes he speaks of 'mournful peasants etched against a vast expanse of sad horizon'. Were those peasants any more mournful, one wonders, than a solitary shepherd on a rain-swept Yorkshire moor? The 'secret police' take a close interest in his movements, to say nothing of a ubiquitous 'Indian gentleman with the Order of Lenin' who spends day and night in the foyer of the hotel. Highly efficient when one thinks of the 30,000 tourists who visit Moscow yearly from the West!

To sum up, the account of this trip, while generally entertaining, at times interesting, and often irritating, is too superficial to be of value. Mr. Mair's conclusions resemble those of so many others from among the thousands who have been to Moscow. It is a pity that with his eye for detail and talent for writing Mr. Mair could not have discarded his preconceptions and penetrated a little beneath the surface of Russian character and life.

SOFKA SKIPWITH.

THE ORIGIN OF MAN

The Origin of Man. Mikhail Nesturkh. (FLPH. 1959. 349pp. Illustrated. 30/-.
Available from Central Books.)

THIS is a translation of a book published in 1958 by the Academy of Sciences, and is an excellent example of the type of popular yet authoritative exposition of science now being produced in the Soviet Union.

In the first part of the book the author assembles the biological evidence which proves that man is related to all other animals, and that he arose as the most advanced species of animal by a long process of development. A wealth of fact and observation shows that man's immediate ancestry is found among the fossil anthropoid apes.

The author then discusses the physical peculiarities of the human body which most sharply distinguish man from the anthropoids, and shows how these characteristics have developed during evolution. The decisive factor in bringing about these changes was the adoption of social labour and tool-making by the earliest men. The germs of labour, social organisation, the use of tools, are found among apes, but it was the co-operation of primitive men for productive work which created the bodily, mental and social characters of modern man that so sharply distinguish him from the apes.

In the last section the development of modern man is very clearly described in relation to the fossil evidence, paying special attention to the association between each type of fossil man and his associated tools and cultural level.

This is a very stimulating book for the general reader. It has the advantage that the author throughout takes a decided standpoint on debated questions while giving fair mention to opposing views. The book contains many excellent and valuable illustrations and diagrams, and concludes with a useful bibliography containing over 500 references, about half of them to Russian sources.

A. G. MORTON.

TURGENEV AND TOLSTOY

Turgenev: The Novelist's Novelist. Richard Freeborn. (OUP, 201pp. 21/-.)

Turgenev: The Man, his Art and his Age. (Orion Press. 406pp. 36/-.)

Married to Tolstoy. Cynthia Asquith. (Hutchinson. 288pp. 30/-.)

EACH of the two new books on Turgenev may be read either as a complement or as an antidote to the other. Taken together they present a fairly comprehensive picture of the man and the artist, but each is written in such a vastly different style from the other that it is possible that readers attracted by one will be repelled by the other.

Dr. Freeborn's approach is quite uncompromisingly academic, demanding and rewarding close attention in the reader, who thus makes in Turgenev the acquaintance of a perfect artist in prose—perhaps somewhat caviare to the general, a novelist's novelist, the perfection of whose technique should be required study for the apprentice writer. Mr. Yarmolinsky, on the other hand, is chattily anecdotal, and the reader is presented with the portrait, slightly condescended to, of a fretful hypochondriac who beguiled a tedious existence with polemical but rather Laodicean *belles-lettres* and tentative amours.

Both books succeed, each in its chosen

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The volumes will not necessarily be issued in numerical order. During 1961 will appear the volume containing Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, which have never previously been available to English readers. The completed set will, of course, contain much material translated into English for the first time, as well as famous works by Lenin long available in English.

LAWRENCE AND WISHART

purpose. Dr. Freeborn convincingly demonstrates Turgenev's inflexible artistic integrity, a *pryamolineynost* assailed from all sides by parties interested in its prostitution; and interesting and stimulating theses concerning Turgenev's progress as a writer are systematically and thoroughly examined with a fidelity to academic discipline that is in itself artistically satisfying. Particularly interesting is the examination of Turgenev's political development, with its ultimate insistence that the individual has value only as a member of society.

Mr. Yarmolinsky's book was aimed in the first place at an American audience, and by English students of Turgenev there will possibly be found to be in it some over-emphasis on the purely personal and capricious: the impression tends to grow, while one is reading the book, of a penetrating intellect apologetically burying valuable critical observations under a great blanch-mange of trivial chatter about tedious comings and goings between St. Petersburg, Spasskoye, Paris, Baden-Baden and so forth. Madame Viardot looms obsessively as her strange admirer chases her and his health all over Europe, quarrelling lovingly with everyone who repudiates his almost cunning attachment to a precarious *via media*.

Odi et amo. Mr. Yarmolinsky invokes 'that ambivalent emotion which excruciated Catullus' to account for the turbulent relations existing between Turgenev and Tolstoy. Those much more turbulent relations between Tolstoy and his wife are the subject of the late Lady Cynthia Asquith's book *Married to Tolstoy*. This is a record of the forty-eight years of fierce devotion to Tolstoy by the 'skilled nurse of her husband's genius'. It is a rehabilitation of the reputation of the Countess, much maligned as his murderer by her husband's crazy adulators—'a slow murder', as she herself sharply commented in 1910, 'seeing that my husband has lived for eighty-two years'.

Having been wooed and won in a 'romantic' manner by a dashing aristocrat with a distinguished military career behind him and a brilliant literary career before him, the Countess had suddenly, after 'the crisis' in Tolstoy's life, to adapt herself to his uncompromising demands for an active denial of all she had previously held dear.

Her struggle is told with sympathy for the harassed woman who in these circumstances bore him thirteen children, and who among other secretarial tasks had previously copied out the manuscript of *War and Peace* seven times. 'The only thing I can do really well', she wrote in her diary—'make a personal sacrifice for the man I love.' This she was doing, pressed down and flowing over, throughout her married life.

A woman of fierce spirit and not without literary ability of her own, she was unable calmly to accept the stifling of her husband's creative genius which inevitably accompanied

his 'conversion': she 'feared that the preacher in Tolstoy might kill the artist. That is why, as other women fight drink in their husbands, she in hers fought didacticism'.

Battling continuously against the growing contempt of her husband for all earthly goods, and beset by the strange horde of Tolstoyans who battered on her hospitality, it is surprising that it was not until the very end that she was rendered almost insane by frustration, and above all by the machinations of Tolstoy's 'black shadow', Count Chertkov.

Although this book fires a round in the vindication of a woman about whom there is still controversy, it is most delightfully written and quite free from emotional over-protecting; even Tolstoy himself emerges undiminished.

W. S. BAILEY.

POETS AND POLEMICS

The Poets of Russia, 1890-1930. Renato Poggioli. (Harvard University Press, OUP. 384pp. 60/-.)

PROFESSOR POGGIOLI'S interesting, useful, but sometimes exasperating book is a study of those Russian literary movements at the beginning of the present century which can be closely linked to, or paralleled by, similar movements in the development of modern western poetry.

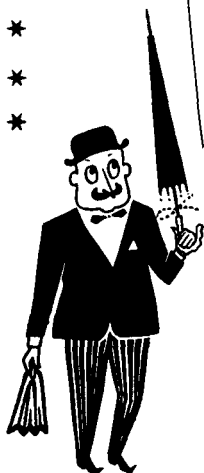
His focus of interest is clearly the symbolists and the decadent and symbolist traditions are dealt with in considerable detail against the native and international cultural background. This discussion culminates in an intelligent appraisal of Aleksandr Blok, the only poet who has a chapter to himself. Blok's 'nihilism' is perhaps overstressed, but a thoughtful and sympathetic portrait is presented.

The treatment of post-symbolist trends—acmeism, futurism, imagism, constructivism—is less well documented and on the whole less satisfactory. Both Mayakovsky and Esenin are dismissed very briefly (six pages each), and although Mr. Poggioli is not unfair or unsympathetic towards Mayakovsky within the meagre limits he sets himself, one is conscious of a damaging disproportion in the design of the book, which after all claims to cover the period down to 1930, and should therefore have Blok and Mayakovsky as its two major pivots. It soon becomes apparent, however, that this misproportion is deliberate, as the tone of the book grows increasingly polemical; and although the author admits his 'relative ignorance' of Soviet poetry he has no hesitation in referring to 'the wasteland of Soviet poetry', 'the barren vista of Soviet culture', 'the horrors of Soviet life', and 'the twilight of poetry and art now casting its shadow on the whole of the Communist world'.

It is a pity that a scholarly work which is

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ostensibly (and to a large extent genuinely) an objective study in literary history should descend to this level. There is a place for polemics, but it is not within the covers of a textbook produced by a university press.

There are also too many typographical errors for a university press: e.g. Y. Montague, Carvocoressi, Arthaud, Merimée, Ambrosio, T. H. Hulme, Zhemzhuchnikov, Kar'kov, *Salon des Indépendents*, *Bezphochvennosti*.

These criticisms, however, are criticisms of a book which has much that is admirable and valuable to say about the pre-revolutionary literary scene. An extensive bibliography adds to its value for students of the period.

EDWIN MORGAN.

SOME RUSSIAN COLLOQUIALISMS

A Book of Russian Idioms. I. B. Faden. (Methuen. 64pp. 6/6.)

THIS is a good and useful little book, but it could have been better, and certainly more comprehensive, even for a small book. It presents a collection of idioms which the author came across in his very extensive reading, but it gives a rather misleading idea of Russian idioms as such. In particular, the absence of certain very common idioms is very striking.

Explanations of usage are in general good, but there are some errors and instances where a fuller explanation would have helped. Here are a few examples:

V-23: *Vstat' na dyby* has the direct meaning 'to rear' (of a horse); figuratively it means 'to fly into a passion', not 'to protest'.

K-12: In the example quoted under *Kot naplakal, zemlya* is used in the sense of 'land', not 'earth'; i.e. the meaning is 'there was not much land', not 'the soil was poor'.

N-10: *Na ryb'yem myekhy* implies not a tattered overcoat, but one very light in weight. A winter coat in Russia is *lined* with fur, and this one is described as being lined with 'fish's fur'—i.e. having no lining, or none to speak of.

N-21: *Nye myod*. 'It's not all jam'

would have provided a closer analogy than 'a bed of roses'.

ANNA SEMEONOVA

BOOKS IN BRIEF

USSR Today and Tomorrow—Facts, Figures, Pictures. (FLPH, 326pp. 7/6. Available from Central Books.)

THIS is almost a one-volume encyclopædia about the USSR. Indeed, if it had been printed in normal-size type it would come to nearer 600 than 300 pages; unfortunately it is in small type, and is therefore literally packed with information. Teachers and speakers who want a quick, handy reference book will find it useful.

H.C.C.

The Training of Scientists in the Soviet Union. K. Galkin. (FLPH, 1959. 204pp. 6/-. Available from Central Books.)

THIS is an informative historical survey of higher education and the organisation of scientific training in the USSR. It is based on a study published by the author in 1958, but has been rewritten for the foreign reader and in the light of the recent education reform.

It contains useful data on the number of higher schools and of students, with breakdowns by nationality and specialisation, but for the most part the figures relate to 1956 or 1957 and the rapid expansion of recent years is not brought out. A useful appendix gives the text of the 1958 act reforming the Soviet school system.

The book does not, however, answer many of the questions asked about Soviet higher education, and no judgment can be made about standards; for, while outlining the Soviet approach and surveying what has been achieved, the author does not give details of curricula and syllabuses, nor does he describe the approach to teaching. But he brings out very clearly the attention that has been given to higher education and the efforts made to provide a body of scientists capable of coping with the tasks facing Soviet society.

H.C.C.

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